THE MAN HIGHER UP

HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

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THE MAN HIGHER UP

M. LEONE BRACKER

THE MAN HIGHER UP

*A story of the Fight, which is Life and
the Force, which is Love*

By HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

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THE MAN HIGHER UP

BOOK ONE

IRON ORE

THE MAN HIGHER UP

CHAPTER I

KNIGHT ERRANT

IN the heart of the foot-hills, in a basin where two rivers meet to form a mighty third, lies the Steel City. It is not a beautiful city. It boasts its magnificent residences, stone and brick castles of its many millionaires. Its citizens proudly point to its spacious parks, costly boulevards and stately public buildings. But withal they admit its lack of beauty, resting its claim to the world's consideration rather upon its wealth. For the Steel City has laid under tribute the treasures of nature to feed its furnaces, which in turn feed the industries of the world. From the river the fog rises, from a thousand huge stacks bituminous smoke belches; and fog and smoke, mingling, form a perennial cloud that coats the city with grime and soot. The roar of its factories never ceases.

To see the Steel City you must journey by night along its rivers, whose yellow, placid waters, reflecting the lights of a hundred steamers, seem a field of gold encrusted with diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Mile after mile, you pass by mills, mills, mills—nothing but mills—magnificent monuments to the inventive and adaptive genius of man. Thousands of black-faced, muscular Titans rush hither and thither, swift, methodical, earnest, single-purposed. But even this powerful army, levied from the world's strongest, is pigmy-like beside the marvelous mechanism, which works, seemingly, of its own will, unerring, unfaltering, unceasing, irresistible. Rivers of molten metal flow beneath your gaze. Massive ingots of white-hot iron, beyond the strength of men to lift, swing easily on the cranes from cast to car. Fiery serpents of steel writhe and plunge as though obsessed by the spirit of hell that broods over the scene, but helpless in a clutch that never relaxes. An awful roar shakes the earth to its foundations. An awful glare blinds the unaccustomed eye. These are the great steel mills, grinding, crashing, a miracle of power, the smithy of the world. This is the Steel City.

He was standing at the window in one of the city's bleakest tenements, a ragged, dirty-faced boy. In the years he remembered of his ten he had known no other surroundings. Of what went before, he knew—was to know—nothing. From without came the sound of shuffling, uncertain footsteps. He turned in an attitude of sullen expectancy.

"If he licks me again, I'll run away," he muttered. The faded drudge who shared the room with him nodded hopelessly.

The door opened and the relic of what had once been a man entered. "My felish'tashuns, ghentle par'-ner 'f my jhoysh an' shorrowsh," he addressed the woman in drunken irony. "Wha've y' got t' eat?"

"Nothing."

"An' why not, faithful Penel'pe? I'll have you know I'm hungry. By God! woman, I'm hungry. Why not?"

"No money," answered the woman, listlessly, hopelessly.

"No money? That remin'sh me. Where'sh that Bob. O, there y'are, y' little devil. You got 'ny money?"

"How'd I get any money?" demanded the boy sullenly.

"How'd you get shome money? Lish'n t' that, woman," the man demanded oracularly. "Thish li'l brat, thish homelesh outcast whom I 'dopted in the shar'ty 'f my heart—thish objec' 'f the philanthr'py which 'sh the sherished relic of th' daysh when I wash a ghentleman an' wore purple an' fine linen—thish ungrateful sherpen' whom I took int' my bosh'm an' warmed an' clothed an' fed—daresh to ask, 'How'd I get 'ny money?' Thush he repaysh me f'r my hoshp'tal'ty, boun'lesh," he waved his arm in all the magnificence of drunken oratory, "boun'lesh as the vasthy deep. Scum of th' earth—offal—I don' care how y' get th' money. Beg it—shteal it—it'sh all one t' me."

"Ain't a beggar. Ain't a thief," said the boy doggedly.

"Meaning that I'm a beggar an' a thief? I'll have you know, you brat, that y' are addreshin' a ghentl'm'n, a ghentl'm'n 'f misfortune."

In a sudden, unexpected movement, the drunken man lurched toward the boy and with one hand seized him by the collar, with the other he picked up a stout stick. While the woman looked on with the dull indifference of one who has seen so much evil and cruelty that all sensibility is deadened, he belabored the boy cruelly, frenziedly. For a time Bob submitted to the beating in a stoic silence horrible in such a mite of humanity, devoting his energies to the unsuccessful effort to dodge the descending stick, until a blow of unusual force fell upon his shoulder. Then his dirty face was distorted with pain and hate. His clenched lips parted in the shrill scream of a wounded tiger cub. Quick as a thought, he seized the hand that grasped the stick and buried his teeth in the flesh until they met the bone. Uttering a howl, the drunken brute dropped to the floor, rolling in agony. The boy wasted no time in gloating over the downfall of his assailant, but, seizing a ragged cap, darted through the door. On the landing he paused for an instant in his flight and, with the swift certainty of one who has foreseen the event and planned for it, pulled up a loose board in the corner and drew out the sum total of his worldly wealth—a single dime. Then his flight was resumed.

He did not cease running until the tumble-down tenement district was far behind him. Then he set his face toward the down-town business section of the city.

A portly gentleman of good-natured aspect came toward him. The boy boldly accosted him.

"Say, mister, where can I buy some papers?"

"I've no money for you," answered the gentleman impatiently.

"Don't want any money. Got all I want," the boy said sturdily.

The gentleman laughed. "That's more than I have, my youthful Crœsus. *Press* office. Fifth Avenue, three blocks down."

And the boy trudged bravely on his way through the crowded thoroughfare, unmindful of smarting shoulders, his fortune grasped tightly in his fist.

The statement that his fortune was carried in his fist is true in two senses of the word. For when he had expended his treasure in copies of that organ of publicity known as the *Press,* with the instinct of genius he sought the most crowded corner of the city's busiest avenue. Here an unforeseen obstacle met our young knight errant. Hardly had he begun to cry his wares, with a boldness of mien born not of experience but of the spirit within him, when another "newsie," who had preëmpted the corner, swaggered up to him and fiercely challenged:

"Say, kid, wotcher doin' here?"

"Sellin' papers," said our young friend.

"Not much, yer don't. Dis is my stan'. Take a sneak, see!"

"Aw, go to hell!" And then the fight began.

The assailant was the older and bigger, but this was a style of argument with which Bob was familiar. In his hard little body was packed the beginning of that great strength which later won him fame, so that he was a match for his bigger antagonist, sending as good as he received. He dealt his blows lustily and maliciously, greatly to the delight of the crowd that gathered to observe the hostilities. Not the least interested was the burly, red-faced limb of the law who controlled the traffic at that corner.

"My money on the little fellow," laughed a youth of apparent sporting proclivities.

"Shure," said the policeman, "an' ye'll be findin' no takers, I'm thinkin'."

"Officer," a woman cried indignantly, while she stared at the little fighters, fascinated, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Pull them apart at once."

"O, lave thim alone, ma'am," responded the guardian of the public peace. "It'll be doin' thim good."

"Lord!" shouted the sport, "see that uppercut. I win. The little one has him down."

The sport spoke truly. The combatants were prostrate in the gutter, Bob on top and pommeling his antagonist's features with an earnestness of purpose that was inspiring. At this crisis the policeman regretfully recalled himself to duty.

"That's enough, me son," he declared, pulling them apart.

" 'Tain't enough," the victor rebelliously answered, a thin ribbon of blood streaming from his nose, the light of battle in his eye. " 'Tain't enough till he says I can sell papers here."

"Ain't he th' little divil!" the policeman ejaculated admiringly. "Ye stay all right, kid. Ye're th' boss now. Show's over, frinds. Move on."

And so, while his late antagonist slunk, sniffling, away to hide his disgrace, Bob McAdoo stayed, master of the field and convert to the doctrine of the great American specialty—Monopoly. When darkness fell that evening the original dime's investment and a third replenishment were sold out; and Bob, with a pocket full of pennies, faced the responsibilities of wealth.

When the policeman entered his home that night and faced his faithful spouse, it was with a quaking spirit.

"Well, now," his lady exclaimed sarcastically, "well, now, Pathrick Flinn, an' what is this angel av marcy ye do be bringin' home th' night?"

"Shure, Norah," Patrick apologized, " 'tis the most illigint little gamecock ye iver saw. He came to me corrner this afthernoon, a-sellin' papers. Th' newsie on th' corrner, a big gossoon what's always bullyin' th' little fellows, thried fur to chase him away. An' what did me little bantam do but go afther that big bully like me sainted namesake afther th' snakes in th' ould counthry. An' he wiped th' gutther clane wid him. Shure, 'twas th' most buchus thing ye cud imagine, barrin' bein' in a sim'lar shindy yersilf. An' whin I was fur lavin' me corrner, the laad come up to me an' says, 'Say, mister, where'll I be findin' a place to slape th' night?' 'Over beyant be th' river, there's a lot av boxes,' says I. 'Aw, t'ell wid boxes,' says he, 'it's a bed I'm wantin'.' 'An' what'll th' likes av ye be doin' wid a bed?' says I. 'Slapin', av coorse', says he. 'I nivir slipt in a bed, but I got lots av money now an' I'm wantin' a bed f'r th' night.' 'How ould arre ye?' I asks. 'Ten years,' says he. 'An' where have ye been livin'?' 'Nowhere;' says he. 'Who's yer payrints?' 'Ain't got any,' says he. 'Who've ye been livin' wid?' 'Nobody,' says he. 'Shure, ye're a quare custhomer,' says I. 'An' who owns ye?' 'I own mesilf,' says he. 'Thin come home along av me th' night,' says I. An' here he is.

"An' now," Patrick concluded sadly, "he must be goin', f'r there's no room f'r him here."

"Think shame to yersilf, Pathrick Flinn," Norah cried hotly, "to be thinkin' av sendin' a poor, motherliss little spalpane like him out into the cold worruld!"

While Patrick chuckled within himself over the success of his diplomacy, Norah fell to her knees and drew the boy to her ample bosom. At which unaccustomed tenderness, the frozen springs of his childish heart were melted and Bob burst into a torrent of sobs.

"Husha, husha, me de—arr," crooned Norah. "There's no nade to be cryin'. Shure, ye arren't to be lift alone, nivirmore, nivirmore."

Bob drew back from her embrace and, stamping his feet, cried:

"I'll never cry again—not—another—dam'—time!"

"Whisht! ye little spalpane!" Norah laughed. "Don't ye be swearin'."

"Ain't he th' little divil!" Patrick slapped his thighs delightedly. "Bob, shake hands wid Molly and Kathleen—an' make yersilf at home."

Bob obeyed.

Some hours later, Patrick, bearing a candle and accompanied by Norah, crept up-stairs softly to the spare bedroom where Bob, face downward, reposed in uneasy slumber—and in a bed. Norah sank to her knees by the bedside.

"Th' poor, poor la-ad!" she murmured, laying her hand gently on his shoulder.

Bob groaned and in his sleep shrank from the touch. The movement displaced the nightgown—Kathleen's—and disclosed a black and blue shoulder.

"Th' little spalpane!" Norah whispered tenderly.

"It's not from fightin', I warrint ye," Patrick whispered. "It's on his back."

"Don't you hit me again, Jim Thompson," Bob screamed in his dreams. "When I'm big, I'll kick hell out of you."

"Th' little divil!" Patrick whispered compassionately.

"He's like Paddy 'ud 'a' been," sobbed Norah.

"Arrah, Norah, darlint, ye do be makin' a fool av yersilf over th' la-ad that was nivir borrn." Paddy was the boy for whom the Flinns' hearts had always longed, but who never came.

CHAPTER II

BOB LAYS HOLD OF THE WORLD

WITH deep satisfaction of soul Bob opened his eyes on a new day.

"I'll stay here," he said aloud.

And stay he did, Bob, in the arrogance of his boyish egotism, taking his welcome for granted, while to the Flinns, big-hearted and instinctively hospitable, it never occurred to wonder at the boy's presumption. The arrangement thus tacitly established proved a happy one. Bob found in the wholesome, homely atmosphere of the policeman's family life a partial corrective for the dwarfing influence of the tenement. As for Patrick and his wife, had they been told—which they never were—that they were exercising an unusual virtue in thus adopting the little vagrant, they would have been astounded, such pride did they take in Bob from the beginning. And the non-appearance of little Paddy ceased to trouble their honest hearts.

So it was that when Policeman Flinn set out that noon to his duties, Bob accompanied him, to revisit yesterday's battle-field where henceforth, by right of conquest and Patrick's protection, he was to reign supreme. And when the day's work was done, together they returned home to "Irishtown."

A few days later their bonds were finally riveted.

It was Saturday night, and the family of Flinn was gathered in the kitchen, which was also the living-room. The master of this household, reclining in the one big arm-chair, was seeking the ministrations of my lady Nicotine, who, in Patrick's case, was a very strong lady indeed. Norah's head was bent abstractedly over a basket of sewing—no fine lady's embroidery, but the homelier task—and no mean one—of darning her lord's socks. Over the table in the corner Bob counted the earnings of the week. To this task the assistance of Molly and Kathleen was needed, since, alas! Bob's notions of arithmetical values after the sum of ten was reached were hopelessly vague.

"Three dollars and fifty-three cents," Kathleen announced proudly.

"'Tis th' wealth av th' Injies," gibed Patrick. "I s'pose now, Bob, ye'll be lavin' yer frinds f'r th' milyunaires av th' East End, ye're so rich. An' what'll ye be doin' wid so much money? Belike, ye'll set up wid a bank here in Irishtown. 'Bob McAdoo, Banker'—it has th' fine, large sound to it. Or betther still, ye'll kape a saloon. 'Twould be a fine investmint, that last; Irishtown has a snakin' thirrust f'r the crather."

"He'll be layin' aside a bit av it, a dime or a quarther mebby, f'r th' Sisters whin they come, won't ye, Bob?" Norah suggested piously.

But Bob had planned other uses for his money than either speculation or charity. He laid to one side the fifty-three cents and gathered together the three dollars, which he carried over to Norah and dropped, jingling, into her capacious lap.

"An' what's this for?"

"Take it," said Bob.

"Ye mane kape it f'r ye?"

"No, keep it fer yourself."

"An' why should I kape it?" demanded Norah.

"To pay fer me bed an' grub."

"Away wid ye, ye little rapscallion! Kape yer money, ye'll be nadin' it f'r clothes an' th' like. Ye can stay here without payin' yer way, an' welcome."

"But that's char'ty ain't it?" Bob demanded directly.

"Well, yes—sometimes," Norah returned slowly, embarrassed by the straightforward question. "But not in this case, whin it's frinds is givin' to ye."

"Ain't goin' to be a char'ty boy," Bob insisted. "Char'ty boys gits licked."

With a sudden warm gesture, Norah caught the boy to her. "Shure," she exclaimed compassionately, "ye poor la-ad, ye're not thinkin' we're goin' to bate ye, are ye, Bobsy?"

"No," he answered promptly, "but I got to pay."

"But why?" Norah insisted.

"I don't know," Bob returned slowly, with a puzzled frown, "I ain't a cheap skate. You'll keep it, won't you?"

"Not a cint av it," Norah declared flatly.

Bob gave no answer to this declaration other than to collect the coins and place them in his pocket. Then he took his cap from its peg and, without a word or backward glance, made for the door.

"Hould on there," Patrick cried, leaping after the boy and seizing him. "Where arre ye goin'?"

"I don't know," said Bob coolly.

"Thin why arre ye lavin' this time av night?"

"I'm goin' to find a place where they'll let me pay."

For a moment Patrick stared helplessly at his wife, and then laughed delightedly. "Ain't he th' little divil! Hand th' money to th' ould woman. Ye stay, Bob."

So Bob established his footing and won his second battle.

When the money had been put away, Norah sat down once more and surveyed her husband suspiciously. His half-closed eyes were gazing with intense joy into the smoke-cloud, between the puffs loud chuckles breaking from his lips, his big body shaking with merriment.

"An' what be ye a-chucklin' at?" she demanded.

"Shure, Norah, darlint, at th' way th' little divil worruked roun' ye, gettin' his way an' all, an' makin' ye take th' money."

"Humph!" his spouse sniffed tartly. "An' who arre ye to be laughin' at me? Shure, I nivir saw such an ould fool over annywan as ye are over th' la-ad. 'Tis Bob this an' Bob that, till he has ye wrapped roun' his little finger. An' him not a wake in th' house yet! But," her tone changed to one of pride, "it's fine stuff th' little gintlemin's made of, with his pride an' all."

"Ain't a gentleman," Bob flared up unexpectedly from his corner. "Jim Thompson's a gentleman an' he's nothin' but a drunk bum."

"Who's Jim Thompson?" Patrick wanted to know.

"Nobody," Bob answered sullenly. And no amount of cross-examination drew from him information as to his former condition or the identity of Jim Thompson.

It was months before Bob's hatred and fear of Thompson subsided enough to allow him to tell the Flinns of his life in the tenement. Then Patrick sought to find the boy's erstwhile oppressor; but, luckily for Thompson, it was too late. The "gentleman of misfortune" had disappeared and with him vanished the last possible source of information as to the boy's origin.

Years passed and Bob grew in stature, if not in wisdom, viewing life from the lowly standpoint of the newsie, and being thoroughly spoiled by his friends. It was strange, the matter-of-fact fashion in which he tyrannized over Patrick and Norah. Over Molly and Kathleen he lorded as absolutely, when he condescended to share their games. He chose his companions to his own taste and not always wisely, even according to lax Irishtown standards. When not busied at his corner, he fought and bullied and led them in their games and in their mischief. He was the pride of the corner loafers by reason of his propensity and talent for fighting, and they delighted to egg him on to combat with older and larger antagonists. In these fights Bob always came off victor. Wilful, masterful, intractable, he caused much worriment of soul to the elder Flinns, but neither had the heart or even the hardihood to chastise him. Their reproofs, mildly administered, were received with an indifference and cool surprise that robbed them of all possible good effect.

Norah took her trouble, like the good Catholic she was, to Father O'Brien.

"It's not that he's bad, yer Riverince," she explained. "He's not that. But he's so could and mastherful. Mebby if yer Riverince wud spake to th' laad, he'd mind his ways."

The priest spoke to him. What took place at that interview has never been told. Father O'Brien came from it struggling between a frown and a smile.

"The boy is a caution," he told Norah. "He has a strange spirit for a child so young, hard as iron. It is useless, I am afraid, to try to break or mold it. I don't understand how he came by it, unless it is the result of early brutality or rare courage. He is one of the few who must be left to work out their own salvation. So don't try to drive him, Norah. If he's meant for good, it will work itself out."

With fear and trembling Patrick sent him to the ward school. The fear was justified by the results. The boy proved himself bright enough to master his lessons—when he chose. It was rarely, however, his choice to study. He preferred to fight and to drive his schoolmates into mischief. He became the bully of the school. He was advanced rapidly from room to room, because his teachers were always in haste to be rid of the unwelcome pupil.

His schooling came to an abrupt end when he was thirteen years old. To punish an unusually flagrant act of insurrection his teacher called in the aid of the principal, a stout, pompous young man who was Bob's pet aversion. The principal had no more than seized the rattan when Bob suddenly snatched it from him and belabored the astonished pedagogue with it so fiercely that he fled the room in dismay. Bob then took his cap and bade farewell to school for ever.

By this feat Patrick was at last nerved to his duty. That night he gave Bob a severe thrashing, which the boy, with white face and set teeth, quietly endured. When it was over, he said:

"I take it this time, Pat, because it's from you. But nobody will ever lick me again. And now I'm through with school and papers. I'm goin' to hunt a job."

"Humph!" returned Patrick. "An' who'll be hirin' th' likes av ye, wid such a ripitashun f'r divilry?"

"O, I'll get a job, all right," Bob declared.

The next day Bob entered the confines of Sanger's mills, boldly defying the legend, "No Admittance Except on Business," and of the first workman he met inquired how to find "the boss."

"The boss, is it?" said the workman. "You'll find the foreman over there."

"I don't want the foreman," Bob answered contemptuously. "I want the head boss."

"Mr. Sanger?"

Bob nodded affirmatively.

"You can't see him."

"O, yes, I can," Bob said cheerfully. "Where is he?"

"He's in his office on the other side of the works. What do you want of him?"

"That's my business."

Bob made his way to the office where a cherub in brass buttons stood guard, and demanded to be shown into the great man's presence. He was refused. He then threatened to punch the cherub's head and evinced such readiness and ability to put his threat into execution that the office boy at last tremblingly ushered Bob into the presence of Mr. Sanger.

The master met the interruption with a scowl. "Well, what can I do for you?" he rasped out.

"You can give me a job," Bob suggested.

"Indeed, can I?" the man said tartly. "But, suppose I don't?"

"I'll have to get one somewhere else then," Bob responded cheerfully.

Mr. Sanger laughed in spite of himself. "You're a cool one. What can you do?"

"Well," Bob said thoughtfully, "I didn't think of that. I've scrapped and sold newspapers mostly, but I guess I can do other things just as good."

"Do you think you could stand at that door and keep out of this office impudent boys who have no business here, for four dollars a week?"

"You bet I can."

"All right. When can you go to work?"

"Now," Bob grinned. "You might change your mind by to-morrow."

Bob was as good as his word. While he was on duty, he was a brave and adroit man indeed that reached Mr. Sanger's presence undesired. Bob also established a mastery over the force of office boys, and disciplined the refractory with such promptitude and severity that he reigned a very tyrant. And from office corridor to furnace and rolls was a short step for him.

So Bob took his place among those who were creating a great industry—an industry that taught men to think, to believe, to do big things, that produced a generation of industrial giants.

They lived intense lives, did those giants, driving ahead in a blind, mad rage for conquest, to produce wealth, to create strength. Even the lowliest of these toilers made "big money"—often to be riotously dissipated, alas! Only the fittest survived.

And Bob survived.

When he came to man's estate, he had learned the hard, cruel lesson of the Steel he forged.

CHAPTER III

HE ENTERS A NEW FIELD

BUT Bob was not to conquer in the Empire of Steel. Squire Mehaffey—the Squire had married Molly Flinn—was the pebble that deflected the course of Bob's destiny.

One night this young dispenser of justice for the Fourth Ward entered Maloney's saloon, white-faced and excited.

"Whisky, Mike."

The proprietor placed a bottle before him. "What's up, Jim?"

The Squire made no answer other than to seize the bottle with trembling hands and pour out a full glass of the liquor, which he tossed off at a gulp.

"Where's Bob?" he demanded abruptly.

"In there." Mike's thumb indicated the back room of the saloon. Thither Mehaffey strode. Before a table littered with beer and whisky bottles Bob was sitting, the one silent member of a noisy group.

"Where can I see you alone?" the Squire interrupted without apology.

"You can see me right here. Boys—" At the unspoken suggestion the group, with frank, matter-of-fact obedience, gathered up their bottles and went into the bar-room.

"Well?" Bob interrogated.

The Squire dropped into a chair. "Haggin's turned me down," he announced despondently.

"What's that mean?"

"It means I lose my job. He says I can't run again. He's going to give my job to Harvey, just because he's his nephew. After the way I've slaved for him and done his dirty work in the ward for ten years!" he added bitterly.

"What of it?" Bob asked, with no sign of interest.

"What of it! I lose my only chance to make a livin'. Here I am, thirty-five years old. I've got no education. I don't know bookkeepin' nor anything else. I can't clerk. I ain't strong enough to hold down a job in the mills. The old man won't get me on the pay-roll—says I've had enough and it's time to take care of some of the other boys. It ain't myself I'm worryin' about. I can take care of myself. But how I'm to make enough for three, I don't see."

"Three?"

"Yes, there's goin' to be a baby soon, and I can't see—"

"Humph! You politicians have got no business to have kids. What are you going to do?"

"What *can* I do?" Mehaffey returned helplessly.

"You might fight him," Bob suggested.

The Squire looked aghast at the temerity of the suggestion. "Fight Haggin! What good 'd that do?"

"I thought you wanted to keep your job."

"I do, I do! But what could I do against him? I've got no money—"

"I'll give you some."

"—and besides he's got the ward organization and the pay-roll, and the boys would be afraid to buck up against him. There ain't a man in the ward can beat him."

"O, ain't there?" Bob held up his whisky glass to the light and critically measured it before he drank it. "Well, why do you come to me with your troubles?"

"I thought maybe you'd go to him and ask him to keep me on."

"I won't do it," Bob said shortly.

"But you could. Haggin's always talkin' about what a bully fellow you are, and you got such a pull with the boys he'd listen to you. It ain't for me, Bob," the Squire pleaded, "but for Molly and the kid that's comin'—"

"No," Bob repeated sharply. "I won't ask that fat bully for a favor for anybody."

"Then I'm all in." And the Squire dropped his head on the table and broke into unmanly sobs. Which performance Bob surveyed with disgust.

"Aw, quit it, Jim. Just because that big saphead has turned you down is no reason to bawl like a big baby."

"It's easy for you to talk," whimpered the Squire. "You've got a good job and no wife with a kid comin'. If you were in my place—"

"If I were in your place I'd be a man," Bob interrupted harshly. "I'd go in and fight him and lick him and hold my job."

"I can't," groaned the Squire.

"But I can," Bob said.

By degrees the possible significance of Bob's words wormed its way into the Squire's comprehension. His grief gave way to amazement, amazement to an incredulous joy.

"You don't mean it, Bob?"

"I always mean what I say, don't I?" Bob returned impatiently. "Shut up, Jim, I'm thinking."

For some moments Bob stared at the ceiling. Then he called out abruptly:

"Mike, come in here. And bring the boys—and some more whisky."

Mike came in as bidden, bringing the liquor, "the boys" trooping obediently in behind.

"The drinks are on me, boys," Bob said by way of preliminary.

When every one had taken his quota, he continued, "Boys, Haggin has turned Jim down."

"Well, I guess that lets Jim out," said Mike pityingly.

"That's tough," commiserated the boys in chorus.

"I tell him," Bob continued, "that he ought to fight him."

Mike shook his head. "It can't be done, Bob."

"No, it can't be done, Bob," echoed the chorus.

"Yes, it can," Bob responded tartly. "And I'm going to do it."

An amazed silence fell upon the group. The silence was broken by Mike's delighted ejaculation.

"Be th' poker! it's a fine scrimmage we'll be havin'. If annywan can lick Haggin, ye're th' bye, Bob."

"That ye are," assented the chorus, awakened from its wonderment.

"And you boys are goin' to help me—that is," Bob added contemptuously, "unless you're afraid of Haggin."

"We're not," indignantly denied the chorus. (Haggin was absent.)

"O, we're wid ye, Bob," Mike promised gleefully, "so be ye give us plinty av fightin'."

"All right. Be here to-morrow night and I'll tell you what to do. And bring the other boys along—as many as you can get. Come along, Jim." And, meekly followed by the Squire, who had not yet recovered from his astonishment, Bob left the saloon.

In a community like Irishtown such news travels fast. Before the night was done, the word had been passed to all the saloons, "Bob McAdoo is goin' to fight Haggin fer Squire Mehaffey."

Wherefore Irishtown lifted up its voice and rejoiced.

Now Haggin was of a type that with the growth of our large cities has become a powerful influence in civic affairs, the boss politicians of our "tough" wards. He had been a prize-fighter, and a successful one. History records how he fought a twenty-round draw—bare fists—with Donnelly, heavyweight champion of the world. At the zenith of his career he abandoned the ring and invested his last purse in an Irishtown saloon. And Irishtown counted it an honor to buy its drinks from the only man that had ever given Donnelly a hard fight. So that Haggin waxed prosperous and sported many diamonds. It was a natural result of his popularity and business that he should go into politics. He developed a certain crude genius for the game. He was good-natured—when not opposed. He knew how to be generous, when to be generous was good policy. And he learned to organize his henchmen. But beneath all were his fame and skill as a fighter. Consequently he became the undisputed autocrat of things political in the

Fourth Ward. Its citizens were glad to follow a leader who was always ready and able to thrash any recalcitrant. As boss of the most populous ward in the city he was consulted by his party leaders and came to have a decided voice in municipal affairs at large. This in turn helped him in the management of his ward. A choice handful of pay-roll plums was turned over to him, and with these he reinforced his organization. It was popularly believed that Haggin was physically and politically invincible.

Hence the amazement which greeted the news that Bob McAdoo had inaugurated a fight against the "old man." When Haggin heard of it, he laughed.

"Aw, hell! what can that kid do?" he grunted disdainfully.

Fortunately for Bob, his fight was cast among people who took their politics as they took their whisky: straight. During campaign time they ate, drank, moved and dreamed in an atmosphere charged with political electricity. And they loved a fight, with all the sturdy, brave, pugnacious souls of them. Moreover, the odds were against him. Now the average American—especially the Irish-American—loves fair play and has a sneaking admiration for the under dog. Then Bob already had a certain personal following, which nucleus he began systematically to augment.

There were in this campaign no great mass meetings, no resounding oratory, no gorgeous processions with transparencies and banners. Haggin was too old a hand at the game not to know the worthlessness of these features in his community, and Bob had no taste for such "grandstand plays." But there were gatherings in sundry upper and rear rooms, where the cup passed unrestrictedly and the proceedings developed into bacchanalian orgies that would have done credit to the ancients. And what money Bob could scrape together was turned over to the Squire to use "where it would do the most good." Most effective of all, there was organization, scientific distribution of the McAdoo forces; it was Bob's name and personality that gave the fight significance. There was first the executive committee, consisting of Bob, Patrick and Mehaffey. Then each precinct had its captain, and he his lieutenants, whose duties were to canvass their respective territories and make report thereon to headquarters.

And soon Bob's fight assumed formidable proportions and the fame of it spread abroad throughout the city.

"This young McAdoo of the Fourth is a corker," said the great MacPherson. "Of course, Haggin 'll beat him; the old grafter has too strong a grip on his ward to lose this time. But the youngster will bear watching in the future."

"By God! this is a *fight!*" Haggin exclaimed, when reports began to come in to him.

But the fight came to a most unexpected ending.

Bob not only directed the manœuvers of his little army, but himself took an active part on the skirmish line. It was his nightly habit to go around the saloons where, after "setting 'em up," he would say: "Boys, I want you to vote for the Squire." And few there were who dared other than give the desired promise. In many cases, of course, the promise was given with no intention of fulfilment. Nevertheless many a firm adherent was thus gained.

These excursions were not confined to the saloons of his allies, but were boldly carried into the strongholds of the enemy, who, bound to Haggin as they were by ties of interest, would have preferred to cast Bob out, but dared neither to deny him admittance nor to criticize to his face the actions of the young giant for whose fists they had such wholesome respect. It was even rumored that he proposed to invade the great Haggin's saloon on the same errand. The rumor raised in Irishtown's heart the most blissful of anticipations. It also came to the ears of Haggin.

The second night before the primaries, Irishtown was in a frenzy of excitement. The saloons were crowded, the streets alive with eager, expectant men and boys. A reporter of one of the morning papers entered Maloney's saloon and accosted Bob, who stood at the bar talking to a group of his workers.

"Mr. McAdoo," said the reporter, "I represent the *Gazette*. How do you think the ward is going?"

"Find out for yourself," Bob answered curtly. But the reporter, after the fashion of his kind, was insistent.

"I hear," he continued with what was meant as an ingratiating smile, "that you intend visiting Haggin's saloon."

"An ass," Bob answered dryly, amid the guffaws of his followers, "havin' long ears, can hear a lot that ain't his business."

The reporter flushed angrily. "I told the same thing to Haggin," he said spitefully, "and he said if you entered his saloon he'd kick you out. 'Knock the damned stiff's block off,' were his exact words, I believe."

The crowd stood aghast. It was a challenge.

"Is that so?" Leisurely Bob emptied his bottle of beer and then, without a word, left the saloon.

A few there were, though not a sober man among them, who did not follow Bob that night, and ever afterward they regretted the indulgence that deprived them of the sight of what ensued. The rest silently followed him at a respectful distance, torn between delight and fear.

Haggin sat in the rear room of his saloon, trying to maintain a conversation with some of his lieutenants, a difficult matter because of the tumult in the outer room. Suddenly the clamor received a perceptible accession, then instantly ceased, blank silence enveloped the saloon—a painful, uncanny silence through which the ticking of the big clock pierced insistently, threateningly. Haggin sprang to his feet and rushed to the door. There he stopped short, petrified by amazement at the sight before him. For there by the bar, in the midst of an awe-struck, dazed crowd, towered Bob McAdoo.

Bob calmly struck a match and lighted his cigar. "Line up, boys," he commanded.

Slowly, mechanically, as under a compulsion they could not resist, the men moved to the bar.

"What'll you have? This is on Jim Mehaffey, boys."

Not a man dared to name his drink.

"Humph!" Bob sneered. "Whisky for mine. The best in the house, barkeep," he ordered sharply. The bartender moved fearfully to obey.

Then Haggin came to himself. With a low growl he sprang in front of Bob, who nonchalantly looked him over as though the mighty Haggin were a helpless invalid, the crowd instinctively falling back to leave space around the two men.

"Not a drink d'ye get in this house, Bob McAdoo," Haggin raged. "Not a drink, d'ye hear? An' git out o' this saloon—quick, see!"

Bob's only answer was to take the bottle from the bartender's uncertain hand, pour himself a liberal portion, and swallow it at a gulp. Then he seized a glass of water and tossed its contents full into Haggin's face.

The crowd breathed painfully.

Haggin dashed the water from his eyes and shook his great fist before Bob's face. "D'ye know what that means, Bob McAdoo?" he roared. "It means you got to fight."

"All right," Bob responded cheerfully. "That's what I'm here for."

Then began Bob's last fist fight, a battle which still lives unparalleled in Irishtown annals.

Man for man, in point of size, weight and courage, the two were equally matched. On Haggin's side there was the advantage of superior science and the cool generalship of the trained boxer. But Bob was the born fighter and his muscles were hard and elastic as the steel whose forging had developed them, whereas his antagonist had been years out of training. Amid a tense silence, broken only by the shuffling of their feet, they faced each other and began the combat. Coolly, warily, savagely they fought, two splendid brutes, beasts of prey thirsting for each other's blood. After a few feints and passes Haggin dropped into his famous "crouch" and assumed the offensive, the favorite tactics that had won him many a hardfought battle. His great hands and arms shot out and back with the speed and force of a piston rod, landing on Bob's face and body blows that would have felled a lighter or less hardened man. Bob met him squarely, receiving the punishment without flinching and watching narrowly for an opening. Against the skilful guard of the ex-prize-fighter his own lunges, powerful though they were, could make little impression. Suddenly Haggin feinted, then brought his right crashing to Bob's temple. For an instant Bob was numbed and blinded with pain. Then all feeling of hurt left him. He saw as though a red film had been lowered before his eyes. His thin lips drew back cruelly and he pressed forward to meet the onslaught of Haggin, who had thought to finish him with one more blow. There was a short, fierce interchange, then—no one knew just how it happened—it was all over. Haggin the mighty lay on the floor, helpless and groaning, his head rolling from side to side in the futile effort to raise himself.

"Bring some water," Bob ordered sharply.

The bartender brought a bucketful, with which Bob carelessly deluged his prostrate antagonist. Then he turned to the bar.

"The boys'll take another round of the same they ordered before," he said in dry sarcasm.

The spell was broken. The crowd of men who had in awed silence watched the combat, fascinated by the display of primitive brutality, now awoke to a savage shout of triumph, as though the victory were theirs. McAdoo followers and Haggin adherents alike, they cheered the victor, each trying to shake his hand—a familiarity which he coldly denied them and for the refusal of which they strangely admired him the more. Haggin, staggering to his feet, looked on dumbly, uncomprehendingly.

"What—what's the matter?" he muttered thickly.

"Ye're licked, Tom Haggin! Bob McAdoo licked ye!" they yelled derisively.

"Ye didn't lick me. Ye never licked me, Bob McAdoo—*My God!*" His voice rose to a loud shriek, the agonized cry of a monarch who sees his kingdom for ever departed from him.

"Yes, I did," Bob said sternly. "And if you want more of the same, come on."

But Haggin did not come on. He took one step toward Bob, then a new, unfamiliar sensation entered his heart—fear, fear of the big, young man who stood before him. He felt the change in the atmosphere around him. And he knew that he—Haggin the feared, the terrible, the unconquered—was indeed and at last "licked."

"My God!" he groaned hoarsely, *"ye did lick me!"* Then in a pitiful attempt to gather the tatters of his lost prestige around the nakedness of his defeat, he yelled again, "But ye could never 'a' done it when I was in trainin'. Ye never could."

A derisive shout went up. "Ha!" sneered one, an erstwhile supporter, "it's easy enough to say that now, when there's no chance o' provin' it."

With the bellow of a mad bull Haggin sprang toward the speaker—who fled the saloon. The ex-pugilist, grim and desperate, turned to the crowd.

"Come on, ye dogs! Bob McAdoo's licked me. But ye hain't. An' ye can't—none o' ye, all o' ye! If there's any thinks he can, come on, as many as ye like, an' I'll show ye!"

"Right!" said Bob contemptuously. "I judge you can handle about a dozen, Haggin. If more'n that comes, I'm with you."

But none came.

The next was the hardest and the greatest moment in Haggin's life. Under the bully was hidden a crude manhood. He turned to his conqueror and said slowly:

"Ye licked me, Bob McAdoo, fair an' square. That goes. Ye're the only man as ever done it. There ain't another man in the city can do it. Shake!"

"Sure," said Bob heartily, grasping the outstretched hand.

"The drinks is on me," Haggin continued painfully, thus completing the public acknowledgment of his defeat as required by Irishtown etiquette.

While the drinks were being poured and consumed, Bob took Haggin by the arm and led him into the rear room, whither many a longing glance was cast, but none dared follow.

"Haggin," he said gruffly, "you're a man. What's the use of you and me fightin'. I can lick you after to-night—that's right, ain't it?"

"That goes," Haggin assented.

"When I went into this political game," Bob continued, "it was to help the Squire out. But I like it, and I'm in it to stay now—for myself. I've got you licked this time. I can go on lickin' you if I have to, but I don't want to have to. Now what's the matter with me and you hangin' together in this deal. Between us we can hold this ward so no one can hurt us. What do you say?"

"Shake again," said Haggin huskily. *"You're* a man."

Thus Haggin was conquered and became Bob's faithful retainer. Not that any romantic sentiment stirred in his brutal heart. It was, at least in the beginning, merely the primitive idea of submission owed by strength to proved superior strength; and the knowledge that, the prestige of his physical supremacy gone, his only hope for continued political preferment lay in alliance with his conqueror.

The Squire was renominated and later reëlected without opposition.

When Bob returned home on the night of his fight, he was awaited by Patrick, who had heard the great news long before.

"Shure, 'tis th' grand bye ye arre wid yer fists," he exclaimed admiringly, seizing Bob's hand. "'Tis a hayroe ye'll be in th' warrud now."

"Let up on that, Pat," Bob rasped out. "D'you think I want to be known for nothin' but fightin'."

"Bedad!" Patrick insisted stoutly. "An' what betther could ye be known f'r?"

"Brains," Bob answered shortly. "Let's get some raw meat for this eye."

CHAPTER IV

THE ROAD TO POWER

THE lure of politics had caught Bob. From the night of his fight with Haggin he began to take the game seriously, devoting much time and work to the perfection of his organization. A few months later the new field suddenly opened wider before him. An era of "reform" was impending.

Now the Steel City was ruled by what was popularly and appropriately denominated the "hog combine"—a group of gentlemen, headed and herded by Steele and Harmon, voluntarily associated to relieve the public of the burden of government. The city was overwhelmingly Republican, had been so ever since it returned its famous majority for Lincoln. Religiously, twice a year, its busy citizens cut their breakfasts short by ten minutes, went forth to save the nation by voting the Republican ticket, and rested from these exhausting political labors with a sense of duty fulfilled. It mattered little that the most of them could not have told you the names on their ballots and knew naught of the motive power behind the candidates. They had voted a "straight" party ticket; all political good lay in the Republican party; *ergo,* they had done all that could be expected of an honest but busy citizen.

While Steele, a born political strategist and a man of magnetic personality, the heart and brains of the organization, lived, the machine found smooth sailing. But the "combine" fell upon hard times. Steele died and the leadership devolved upon Harmon. Harmon possessed none of the personal magnetism that had made Steele's critics love the man while they hated his misdeeds; also he lacked the sagacity and caution of the dead leader. So the machine was allowed to fall into excesses that Steele never would have permitted. The tenderloin ran openly and flagrantly. A big boodling escapade in the halls of the City Fathers came to light. Certain public contracts were let with such incautious unfairness that murmurs of discontent began to be heard. Thus even to the busy citizens' nostrils came a strong odor of putridity. All this might have had no important results of itself; but to cap the climax Harmon, to satisfy a long cherished dislike, dismissed MacPherson from the directorate of public works.

MacPherson was a hatchet-faced, saturnine votary of Mammon. Also there was enough of the Indian in him to make revenge for all affronts a necessity. He accepted his dismissal with apparent equanimity, and instituted a campaign to destroy his enemy. He worked upon the discontent of some old-time ringsters who hated Harmon for his arbitrary manner and who had seen, to their deep chagrin, certain ripe and luscious plums fall into other mouths. A sturdy little band of reformers that had fought long but fruitlessly to overthrow Steele's defenses suddenly and mysteriously took a new lease on life. MacPherson bought a morning and an evening newspaper; sensational exposures followed startling revelations with great effect.

The city began to stir uneasily. One day MacPherson called a few men into his office.

"Gentlemen," said he, "let us reform the city."

And thereupon the "Citizens' Party" was formed.

So it happened that one evening Bob received a call from Robbins, a MacPherson henchman who had the reputation of knowing how to deal with all sorts of men.

"McAdoo," Robbins greeted him, "without beating round the bush, I'll tell you what I'm after. I come from Mack. We want you with us in our fight against Harmon and—"

"All right," Bob interrupted carelessly, "tell MacPherson I'll talk to him any time he says."

"But I have authority—"

"I don't talk to middlemen," Bob said curtly. "Good night."

"All right," Robbins laughed. "You're the doctor."

The next evening Bob was by appointment shown into MacPherson's down-town office. Besides the prospective boss there were in the office Robbins and Graham, the independents' candidate for mayor. Mr. Graham was an elderly gentleman with a pretty complexion, white mutton-chop whiskers and shapely, beautifully manicured hands. He thought he was a reformer and a gentleman of the old school.

"How are you, McAdoo?" MacPherson greeted the new-comer with a cordiality cleverly toned down to fit the man he saluted. "Shake hands with Mr. Graham. You have met Robbins, I believe. Mr. Graham, this is the young leader of the Fourth whom we're hoping to have with us."

Bob maliciously caught Graham's ladylike hand in his own iron grasp and squeezed it until the little man's eyeballs rolled in agony. When he let go, the injured member was quickly placed behind its owner's back, as though it feared once more to be caught in that cruel vise.

"You have a strong grip, Mr. McAdoo—an abnormally strong grip, if I may say so, sir. But," he recalled the effusively patronizing manner that he thought so highly politic, "I am glad to meet you, my dear sir, very glad indeed. I am glad to meet all those who are helping me in my fight. I may say it has been with no inconsiderable inconvenience that I have consented to lead in this great reform. But I have refused to permit personal considerations to stand in the way of manifest duty. I am for political purity, sir. I always explain my position to all my prospective lieutenants. I propose to conduct this campaign along strictly proper lines. In the past the methods of the tough wards, applied to gentlemen in politics, may have—" He stopped suddenly, warned by a sharply monitory cough from Robbins.

Bob grinned sardonically. "O, don't mind me. I'm tough, all right, but don't mind me."

Mr. Graham's blush might have been envied by a young girl. "My dear sir, I—er—apologize. Pray do not misunderstand. My remarks do not, of course, apply—"

"Don't mention it," Bob interrupted. "In tough wards men don't apologize. You're goin' to run this campaign yourself?"

"And why not?" Graham once more mounted his parlor hobby. "Should not the candidate *always* be the leader? Are we not working for a bossless era, in which the leader will be where he belongs—in the front rank under the folds of our standard?"

"Sure! Why not?" Bob rejoined. "Go ahead and try it. It'll be quite an experiment. I'll be interested in watchin' it—from the outside."

"Surely not from the other side," Robbins suggested smilingly.

"From the *winning* side," Bob answered dryly.

"Well, of course—" Mr. Graham stammered. "Of course—er—that is—ahem!—I do not propose to—er—dictate tactics to my assistants. We may have to resort to disagreeable means to gain our great end. We must, if necessary, fight the devil with fire—that's it, fight the devil with fire."

"Humph!" Bob grunted.

"Well, gentlemen," Graham concluded briskly, "I must leave you. My wife and I are dining out and I am already late. I am glad to have met you, Mr. McAdoo." He added this from a safe distance, his hands behind him. With a bow, nicely delivered, he left the room.

"What do you think of him, McAdoo?" Robbins queried.

"He's a curiosity. I'd like to take him—in a glass case, with a sign, 'Hands off'—down to Tom's saloon, and show him to the boys. Why'd you take him up?" he demanded of MacPherson, who had watched the foregoing scene with ill-concealed impatience.

That worthy looked sharply at Bob before responding. "He carries along the old reform crowd—and he'll contribute his money."

"I'd prefer to work for a *man,*" Bob said contemptuously.

"Well, are you coming along or not?"

"What are you goin' to do?"

"In the first place," said MacPherson, "we're going to clean the city of this gang of infernal scoundrels—"

"Talk business. I'm not Graham," Bob interrupted impatiently.

"I know that," MacPherson answered sharply. "I'm not preaching reform. I mean, we're going to knock Harmon and his crowd out of control of the organization and the city and take them ourselves."

"D'you mean that?" Bob demanded keenly. "Or are you only goin' to fight them until they let you to the trough, and then you go back on them that helped you?"

MacPherson's sallow cheeks burned to a brick red; his little eyes glittered venomously. He brought his clenched fist hard down on the desk. "So help me God! I mean it. I'm going to see that dog dead and buried politically, if it takes every dollar I have in the world."

"That's all right. But *can* you do it?"

"We can," MacPherson said, more quietly. "We've got the money, and we've gone over the ground carefully. Here, Robbins, you have the figures."

From memory and with a glib certainty that bespoke careful study of the situation, Robbins reeled off a list of putative majorities, to which Bob listened thoughtfully.

"You see," Robbins summed up eagerly, "this gives us all the upper wards, sure. They're all worked up over there. We come to Irishtown with an easy five thousand majority. And we'll about break even on all the Irishtown wards but the Fourth, Seventh, Thirteenth and Fourteenth. That brings us to you. If we get the Fourth—by its usual majority—we can't lose. If we don't get it, we may win anyhow. That's what we want you for. Some of us advised going to Haggin, but I said, 'No, McAdoo's the man.' You'd better get your horn and climb on the band-wagon," he concluded laughingly.

Bob smoked thoughtfully a few minutes.

"Well?" he said at last suggestively.

"I guess this is where Mack comes in again," Robbins grinned.

"There's five thousand in it for you," MacPherson said, "if you get us the Fourth. And five thousand more if you get the other three. Besides expenses. That's fair, I think. Or, if you prefer, a lieutenancy on the force. The pickings to be for yourself. What do you say?"

"No office in mine," said Bob. "I'll think it over."

"I'd like to hear you say yes now."

"No, I'll think it over," Bob repeated coldly. "I don't know as I care to get in your wagon."

Perhaps MacPherson caught a hint of contempt in the slight accent on "your." Whatever the cause, once more the brick-red surged into his cheeks and the venomous glitter into his eyes. "It won't pay you to stay out," he said, in half threat.

Bob laughed insolently. "I'm not afraid of you. You see, you've showed me your hand. You can't do without me."

MacPherson with difficulty repressed an angry retort, and Bob left the office with a curt, "Good night."

Before he descended to the street—MacPherson's office was on the top floor of an eight-story building, the skyscraper of those days—he stopped to look out through the corridor window. It was one of the Steel City's rarely beautiful nights. A strong west wind had swept away the dome of smoke and overhead a myriad of stars shone brilliantly. And below him and on the hills around him twinkled a myriad of other lights, the street lamps of the big city. Bob knew that beyond the hills and across the rivers many more such lamps were burning, lighting the night for a half million souls! And of the half million two men were struggling with each other for mastery over all the rest. The half million indifferently watched the game and permitted it to go on!

"You fools!"

Yet the thought came to him that, fools though the victims were, between the contestants it was a game worth playing. To hold the great city in the hollow of one's hand, to twist it and buffet it and mock it and use it, to make of it a huge automatic engine to lift one to a chosen eminence! Yes, that was a game for a man, for a strong man!

CHAPTER V

A GIRL AND A DECISION

HENRY SANGER, Sr., steel king, had one passion—his business; and one love—an orphaned niece. He displayed less acumen in the training of the latter than in the management of the former. He had also a wife—but that was of importance only because, for at least six months of the year, she carried the niece away from the Steel City and filled her young mind with what Sanger, who was a self-made man, perceived to be silly notions.

It so happened—if we may term such fateful occurrences "happenings"—that two nights after Bob was invited to join the reformers, while he was working an extra shift, Sanger personally conducted a party through his mills, and that the niece was of the party. The guest of honor was a famous engineer of the English army.

Sanger was dilating upon his passion.

"You are enthusiastic, sir," ventured the guest.

"And why not? We're the most important industry the world has ever known or ever will know. We're the right hand of modern progress. We take a carload of rock from the earth and convert it into steel, the framework of civilization. We are defying nature, conquering her. There is a natural law saying that man shall go only so fast. We make steel rails, set up steel engines, and you go sixty miles an hour. Another law says our coasts are the limit of travel. Our ancestors defied that law with wood and canvas. We make it ridiculous with steel ships driven by steel machinery. There is the law of gravitation which says that man shall cling to the face of the earth. With our steel girders you rear ten- and twelve-story buildings and live in the air. You and I, Major, will see them twenty stories high, and the next generation thirty and forty. You hear that steam is the greatest discovery. Nonsense! What would steam be worth without steel to control and direct it? Some people see in all this around us only a dirty, noisy mess, or view it only in its commercial aspect—and dollars are well enough in their way, eh, Eleanor?—but I don't. I say, 'Here is a tremendous force, the finest product of the human mind, doing in one day what ten thousand men couldn't do in a lifetime. Right here is the beginning of modern progress. Here we make civilization while you wait!' "

"You have reason to be proud of your industry, Mr. Sanger," the Englishman assented.

"To put it in terms of your profession, Major," Sanger pursued his topic eloquently, "I command in the army of construction, while you command in the army of destruction. And I have a notion that when our respective achievements are summed up we'll be given the palm."

"Granted, my dear sir," laughed the major. "And I must say you've mustered in a fine lot of men in your army. That young giant over there, for instance—I'd like to have him."

Sanger's forehead wrinkled in a frown of irritation. "He's the best man in the works—and the worst! I almost wish you did have him. Though he's more use in *my* army than he'd be in yours. He's—well—hardly amenable to discipline—Ah!"

His exclamation was called forth by a sudden movement of the young man under discussion. Intent on his task, he had become aware of Sanger's niece, who stood at his elbow watching and admiring his deft manipulation of the heavy tools. He glared insolently at her.

"You are *very* strong, aren't you?" she said.

For answer he dropped his tools, caught her by the waist and set her back from the machinery.

"Get out of my way!" he growled fiercely.

In an instant he was once more intent on his work, while the young girl, flushed and indignant, stared angrily at him.

"Eleanor!" called her uncle, sharply for him. "Keep away from the men and the machinery. You'll get hurt."

"Rather insolent that, wasn't it?" suggested the Englishman.

"O, he's insolent enough," Sanger half laughed, half frowned. "I've had a taste of it more than once. Though he's right this time; there's danger for a greenhorn around the machines. Young as he is, he is the acknowledged leader of the men. A year ago he led the only successful strike in these mills. The rollers wanted a raised scale on overtime work—he does more of it than any other two men I have. He waited until he knew I was behind on a big contract; then he and the others coolly walked out. He had them hypnotized into obeying him absolutely—I *had* to agree to their demands," Sanger laughed ruefully.

"But isn't it—er—bad for discipline to keep that sort on?"

"I wish I had your means of enforcing it," Sanger said enviously. "It *is* bad for discipline. But I don't dare fire him. He's a born politician—quite a power in city politics already. And if I let him go, I'd never know when he'd be organizing another strike on me. I prefer to keep him under my eye. Besides, he has a couple of minor patents—Eleanor! Keep away—*God!*"

The girl, unmindful of her uncle's warning, had ventured again, in a spirit of resentful daring, too near the rolls. A quick gust blew her skirts against the machinery. Suddenly she felt herself caught from the ground in a terrible grip and thrown prostrate on the rolls. She had a vision of a white-hot steel serpent darting toward her. She gave one despairing shriek. . . . Then another hand caught her. . . . She felt the serpent's hot breath as it passed—interminable—beneath her and the arched, rigid body that bridged the rolls and held her.

Bob, too, had seen.

For a time, while the clock might tick off a long minute, the group stood as though paralyzed, the girl leaning weakly against Bob's strong arm. It was Sanger who first came out of his daze.

"Eleanor! Eleanor! Thank God!" It was a signal for them all to gather around the pale, trembling girl, forcing Bob away from her and staring at her stupidly, nervously, gabbling unintelligently.

Suddenly Bob strode into the group, a towering figure of wrath, elbowing his way roughly. Before his sudden intrusion the group involuntarily fell back, leaving him face to face with the girl whom he had saved. A hot rage possessed him. He saw red, as on that night when he had fought Haggin.

The girl, in the reaction from her fright, did not see this. "You saved my life," she said tremblingly. "It was very good of you."

"You little fool!" Bob burst out hoarsely in his anger. "How dare you risk my life?"

Later, in a cooler moment, Bob remembered the girl and could but admire her, by his roughness restored instantly to her strength and courage. Her head went back spiritedly. "How dare you reprove me?" she said.

"Dare?" Bob held out one great, hairy arm, and then glanced over the slender figure before him. He could have snuffed out her life with a single sweep of his arm. He laughed unpleasantly.

The scorn in her eyes shifted to contempt. "That is a coward's thought. You think because I'm a girl and you're so strong, you can say what you please. You can not. I'm not afraid of you."

"Coward!" A deep flush crept under the smut on his face. "I saved your life when they—" his arm indicated the astounded group—"when they were afraid to move."

"Yes, that is true," she said. "You are just a brute, not a coward. You did save my life. But that gives you no right to reprove me."

"But you risked my life by your foolishness. I guess that gives me the right."

"You didn't have to save me. You have no right," she repeated resentfully.

"I was a fool to do it. My life is worth something, but you—" The unfinished sentence gave contempt for contempt. "But why have I no right?"

"Because you are *you.*"

"Because I am I?"

Because he was himself! He, Bob McAdoo, before whom no man, howsoever strong, dared to stand in combat; whom politicians of high degree approached on terms of equality—nay, as do those who seek favors; he, so great in his own eyes and in the eyes of his own little world, must not rebuke a mere girl whose life he had saved—because he was himself! Here was a new idea indeed! You see, all his life had been spent in a "tough" ward, where true democracy is most nearly approximated. He had read in his books, it is true, of "aristocracy," but he supposed that this was based on the only principle he recognized, that of comparative strength. Apparently he had thought wrongly, yet he could not understand it. This slim girl, with her fearless scorn of his strength and that for which he felt instinctively she stood, were a problem which he must solve, a hostile force which he must master. It suddenly became a personal problem; and it troubled him as nothing had ever troubled him before.

Because he was himself!

Bob stared at his hands, the thick, muscular fingers, the calloused, blackened palms, the hands of whose strength he had been so proud. For the first time in his life his strength seemed to him futile, made so by a slight, pretty girl who looked upon him as a lower order of being. Then in a quick revulsion of feeling, the old pride of strength returned to him in all its arrogance.

"No," it was his soul protesting within him, "it's all a lie. My strength is not futile. I can conquer anything. I must keep faith in myself."

He looked again at the girl, who met his glance fearlessly, proudly. The bystanders in the scene did not count with him, he had not given them a thought. The girl only had not quailed before him. As he looked, a deep personal hatred of her grew up in his heart, not because of that for which she stood but because something had given her a strength of spirit which his jealous own could not break. He reached his clenched fist toward her.

"I wonder I don't kill you," he growled savagely.

"I'm not afraid of you," she said contemptuously. Then, "Ah!" she cried, "you are hurt." It was true. The flesh under his arm, revealed by his gesture, was scorched from the hot steel that had passed so closely to it. In his anger he had not thought of it.

"What's that to you?" he answered roughly. "Get out of my way."

For the second time that night he lifted her and set her to one side. Then he strode abruptly away and out of the mills—for ever.

"O, I forgot to thank him for saving my life," Eleanor said penitently, watching his retreating figure. "I didn't mean to be so horrid to him. Uncle, *why* couldn't he have been a gentleman? He's so big and strong—and *isn't* he fine when his eyes blaze! I'm so sorry he was hurt. . . . And I've ruined this dress completely."

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICIAN

DURING the next few evenings habitués of Haggin's saloon remarked an unwonted air of excitement among the patrons, and mysterious, hasty comings and goings, these journeys being performed by Squire Mehaffey and others known as lieutenants of McAdoo and Haggin. Also several men prominent in the politics of the neighboring wards were seen to enter the back room and remain there a long time, closeted with Bob and the saloon-keeper. The habitués decided that "Bob McAdoo was up to somethin'." A stranger, who had of late frequented Haggin's saloon, also remarked these events. His opinion was given privately to MacPherson.

"Whatever he asks, you come down," he advised. "He's loaded for bear."

MacPherson frowned. "No chance of going over his head?"

"None whatever. Haggin daren't draw a long breath without asking his permission. Funny thing about those fellows down there. They don't like him for a cent, but they take his orders for gospel. Regular little czar, that McAdoo."

When his lines were ready, Bob went to MacPherson. Robbins was there, as usual.

"Good!" exclaimed the latter. "I knew you would be with us."

Bob met his enthusiasm indifferently. "O, I'm not with you until you meet my terms, you know."

"What's the matter with the terms I offered? Aren't they liberal enough?" demanded MacPherson.

"No. I'll turn over the Fourth, Seventh, Thirteenth and Fourteenth by three thousand. You to give me ten thousand dollars, and ten thousand for expenses. The Sixth Legislative's share of the pay-roll to come to *me* for appointment and all orders. Of course, this means the Sixth's regular share." It had been customary, under Steele and Harmon, to give the Sixth Legislative District the lion's share of the plums.

"Say," MacPherson sneered, "you take over the leadership of the party and buy *my* support. It would be cheaper for me."

"Take it or leave it," Bob said coolly. "I can do better with Harmon."

"Well," MacPherson assented with visible reluctance. "But I don't propose to buy you at this price every trip."

"Of course. This deal only covers this fight. We mayn't be together next time."

"Why not?" the boss demanded sharply.

"I don't like you," Bob replied, "and you don't like me. We mightn't get along, you know. Then I'll go somewhere else. You can make out a check for the twenty thousand right now."

"Before you deliver the goods? Not much!"

"O, yes, you will," Bob said easily. "I'll do what I promise, and you know it. I don't know that you will, and after the election I couldn't make you do it. Make it to my order."

"That is, I'm to trust you, and you won't trust me?"

"You can, I can't."

"Well, for concentrated *gall* you take the blue ribbon!" MacPherson ejaculated. But he made out the check as Bob had suggested.

It was a lucky bargain for MacPherson. Bob kept his promise; his four wards returned a majority of nearly four thousand for the Citizens' Party ticket. That party also carried the city by three thousand.

So came the "reformation," and Robert McAdoo began his political career in earnest.

The night after the election, Bob entered the Flinns' sitting-room, where sat his friends in a cozy domesticity whose charm was lost to Bob, Patrick nodding over his pipe, Norah deftly plying her knitting-needles, Kathleen's pretty head bent over a book.

"Kathleen," he said abruptly, "what does a good private teacher cost?"

She looked at him in surprise. "To teach what?"

"O, Latin, Greek, German, history—everything you learn in high school and college. Grammar, for instance. I ain't much—" He caught himself and laughed shortly. "For one thing, I want to get out of this pesky habit of sayin' 'ain't.' What will it cost me?"

"Two or three dollars an hour, I think."

"Can you do it?"

"I can at the beginning, if you will let me."

"All right. We begin to-morrow night. I'll pay you three dollars an hour."

The flush became a deep crimson. "No, not that way, Bob. I couldn't take your money."

"Why not?"

"For one reason," she answered quietly, "you've already given too much money to this family."

He looked at her a moment, intently.

"All right. We do it your way then. You—you're all right, Kathleen," he added gruffly, and went up to his room. Later Kathleen left Patrick and Norah alone.

Patrick, who had *not* been dozing, opened his eyes and winked significantly at Norah.

"Norah, d'ye smell nawthin'?"

"Pathrick, arre ye clane crazy over the gurrul? Besides, Bob's no marryin' man."

"Faith!" said Patrick proudly. "An' *could* he do betther than marry her mother's gurrul. I'm goin' up to talk to th' bye."

He knocked on Bob's door, which was significant, since in that simple household it was not the custom to herald your approach by a knock.

"Come in. O, it's you, Pat? Take a chair," Bob answered.

"Arre ye busy, Bob?"

"O, no. Glad to see you. Only thinkin' a little."

"I wouldn't think too much, av I was you. It's bad f'r th' constytushun," Patrick laughed. "Can't ye say somethin', Bob?"

"Sure. But don't tell Norah."

He opened a closet and took therefrom a bottle and a corkscrew.

"Here's some prime stuff, thirty-three years old, Mike tells me," he explained as he opened the bottle. "You don't mind the tooth-mug, do you?"

"Shure, no," said Patrick, smacking his lips in anticipation. "Tasthes just as good as fr'm a goold mug—though, bedad, it's only guessin' at that last I am."

"Say when." And Bob poured out a liberal portion.

"Whin!" Patrick exclaimed. "D'ye think ye're pourin' f'r a sthone-head like yersilf? But what arre ye goin' to do f'r yer drink?"

"O, I've quit."

Patrick almost dropped the precious mug in his astonishment. "Eh? Ye've *quit!* An' why?"

"O, I just quit. That's all."

"But it nivir hurrts ye," Patrick insisted.

"And I don't intend it to," Bob returned quietly.

Patrick shook his head mournfully. "Ye're a quare laad, Bob McAdoo. There's somethin' lift out av ye, I always did say. Well, it's a cryin' shame t' let good whisky go to wasthe. Here's hearthy! Ah!" And Patrick set down the mug with a sigh of deep soul-satisfaction.

For some moments the two sat silent before the fire, Patrick shuffling about in embarrassment. For he knew not how to unburden himself of his errand. At last he bolted out:

"Bob, why don't ye git married?"

"Humph!" Bob ejaculated contemptuously. "Why should I get married?"

"Think shame to yersilf," Patrick cried indignantly, "to be sphakin' so irrivirint av th' howly esthate av mathrymony. Where'd ye be now, av yer payrints hadn't abin married?"

"I don't even know that they were married," Bob answered. "Besides, marriage's no good to me."

"Ye're a quare laad, Bob McAdoo. Ye have no bowils av tinderniss at all. I don't belave there's a person in th' worruld, av he'd die, ye'd give th' lasthe heartache to. It's, 'What c'n they do f'r me?' wid ye. Ye're so wid Norah an' mesilf. Ye're so wid th' byes. It's so wid Tom Haggin. Though it's a cryin' shame, I say, to see a big, sthrong man like him takin' ordhers fr'm a sthone-headed, sthone-hearted bye like ye. An' not th' lasthe bit av a likin' have ye f'r annywan av us. An' they don't like *ye,* Bob, they don't like *ye.* Ye have no frinds. Ye're th' lonest, frindlissist man I know—sarve ye right!" he concluded exasperatedly.

"Friends!" Bob sneered. "I don't need 'em. You say yourself they do what I want. That's enough for me. What do I want with friendship?"

Patrick threw out his hands helplessly. "Av ye could ask that quistion, ye could nivir undherstand th' answer. But," he returned doggedly to his text, "ye ought to git married just th' same. Ye nade some wan to care f'r ye an' like ye."

Bob laughed. "You just said no one likes me. Anyhow, who'd I marry?"

"Well," Patrick said defiantly, "there's Kathleen."

"O, Kathleen ain't the woman for me," Bob said carelessly.

"An' why not?" Patrick demanded in hurt indignation. "An't Kathleen good enough f'r annywan? An't she better idjicated than yersilf, wid her high-schoolin' an' tachin'? An't she the purthiest gurrul in th' warrud? An't she swate as th' finest lady in th' land?"

"O, you don't understand, Pat," was the impatient answer.

Then Bob did a strange thing. With a quick movement he tore his shirt and undershirt from his body and stood before Patrick stripped to the waist.

"See!"

He drew his arms up and the huge biceps swelled until you would have expected the skin to burst. Then he drew himself tensely together. The big pectorals stood out in thick layers and his waist muscles were a series of bulging, sharply-defined ridges. He turned around. Patrick saw a back covered with knots and lines of magnificent muscles. Bob seized him by the wrists.

"Break loose," he commanded.

Patrick writhed and pulled to break the iron grasp, in vain.

"Harder. You haven't moved my arms. Harder, harder!" Bob jeered.

Patrick increased his efforts until the sweat rolled down his face. He was as helpless in that grip as a babe, and Patrick, despite his increasing fat, was no weakling.

"Bah!" Bob threw him contemptuously into the chair.

"That's why," he cried in passionate pride, "that's why I don't want friends. That's why Kathleen ain't for me. But muscle is nothing. I'm just as strong here." He struck his forehead with his palm. "That's why you all do what I want, because you know how strong I am and are afraid of me. What use has a man as strong as me for friends? What I want to do, I can do for myself without any one's friendship. And how *can* I like people I can break and crush as easy as I bend this poker."

He took up the thick iron rod and without any apparent effort drew its ends together, then straightened it.

"I never felt what you call friendly to any one," he went on, dropping into his usual quiet tone. "I never wanted a friend. All that was left out of me, I think. And I'm glad of it. I can't have anybody, through friendship, gettin' a hold on me. It's the same reason that made me quit drinkin'. It don't hurt me now, but it might get hold of me some day. It's the strongest win out in this world, Pat, *and I must be strongest!*"

Patrick sat, awed and half frightened by this, the longest speech he had ever heard from Bob's lips, and by the spirit that inspired the outburst.

"Ye're right," he said slowly. "Ye're cruel sthrong. An' mebby ye can do without friends. I don't know. But some day, I'm thinkin', ye'll love somebody—*hard!* Thin God pity ye!"

Bob laughed harshly. "I'll risk it."

"God pity ye, whin ye find th' risk ye're takin'," Patrick repeated. He turned from Bob and slowly left the room, wagging his head dubiously.

They did not know that in another room lay a girl who had chanced to hear words not meant for her ears. Minute after minute, hour after hour, dragged by, and Kathleen never stirred. She lay, staring with dry, burning eyes at the white patch of moonlight on the floor until the night outgrew it and left the room in darkness. Poor Kathleen! her love battered and torn under the heedless wheels of a strong man's ambition, was fighting the bitter battle of her life's one romance.

But next evening began the lessons. Never was a more earnest tutor, and never a more faithful pupil. And no one saw the change in Kathleen, her girlhood lost, her womanhood won in a night.

BOOK TWO

IN THE MOULD

CHAPTER I

FIVE YEARS LATER

DIRECTOR of Public Safety McAdoo arranged the documents he had been reading into neat, methodical piles, and rose from his desk, stretching his muscles with a sigh of relief. He had become a faithful desk-worker, but there were times when he longed for the fierce muscular effort of the old mill life. He lighted a long, black cigar and went to a window which opened on the street. It was the Saturday before Christmas, and the city was alive with the peculiarly pleasurable excitement always generated by the Christmastide.

Five years had wrought many changes in the life of Bob McAdoo. He was twenty pounds lighter than when he had worked in the mills, although his sinews were still kept in condition by systematic, vigorous exercise. His face was thinner and finer, and marked by lines of thought and study. He had grown mentally in the new life and under Kathleen's tutelage. His clothes were now made by the city's highest-priced tailor, but, worn carelessly, gave little hint of that subtle thing we call style.

His bold negotiations with MacPherson had given him a hold on the Sixth Legislative District which careful organization and judicious bestowal of the patronage made his by virtue of that deal had converted into a veritable despotism. All candidates for councilmanic and legislative honors from that district had come to look to him for nomination and election. Naturally the man who "carried the Sixth in his vest-pocket" was a considerable quantity in municipal affairs. When the second mayor under the MacPherson régime was elected (Harmon and the old combine were now dead and forgotten politically and the fathers of the Citizens' Party were in undisputed control of the Republican organization), Bob was one of the four men who finally selected the fortunate candidate. Under this administration he accepted the office he now held. His signature at the bottom of a check was now familiar to the banks of the city and passed without question, since he was rapidly becoming a rich man.

When MacPherson went into power Bob sold his patent rights to Sanger for a cash consideration and, under Squire Mehaffey's name, formed a contracting firm. This firm secured many profitable jobs from the city government. For instance, when the new Public Safety Building was erected, there were several large firms who made very favorable bids. Mehaffey and Company's bid was higher, but they were nevertheless declared the lowest and best "responsible" bidder and were awarded the contract. This was a very sweet and juicy plum indeed. Later it was decided to construct a boulevard through the fashionable quarter of the city. Bob was one of the few who were aware of this project before it was made public, and secured options on much good property along the proposed route. When the news of the new boulevard reached the ears of the speculators, he sold his options for fifty thousand dollars. A street railway franchise was engineered through councils, largely by means of the votes of

Bob's group of councilmen. Bob's share of the spoils was a large block of stock, which he afterward sold for almost twice its par value. A storm of popular protest arose over this transaction and swept most of those who had voted for the measure out of office. But Bob's friends, who had been the chief offenders, were returned to a man; this was a profitable but dangerous experiment on Bob's part and he never repeated it.

It was at the time of this franchise affair that he was first cartooned under the sobriquet "Knockout Bob," as a big, burly prize-fighter, with the ugly, brutal features, and particularly the heavy, undershot jowl, supposed to be characteristic of men of that profession. Kathleen, with a troubled smile, showed it to Bob.

He gave vent to one of his very rare laughs. "Why, this is fame, Kathleen. Get a scrap-book and save all the cartoons of me, will you?"

All this success was not accomplished easily, but by dint of hard unremitting work and unceasing watchfulness upon MacPherson. For, although they had so far stood together, Bob knew that it was only an armed truce, that the boss hated him. It was largely for this reason that he had made haste to accumulate a large bank account. Once Harmon was well out of the way, Bob knew the only consideration which would prevent MacPherson from making war upon him was that of expense. Bob's money was now an invincible defense.

But to what end, all this? Lately he had begun to ponder this question.

Bob had cast all but self out of his scheme of life. This was violating a law of nature and he was beginning to reap the punishment in a strong discontent. He was not given to sentiment, but as he looked out on the passers-by, all wearing the Christmas air, he realized that they had something he, with all he had won and all he would win, had not. He had no illusions. It had been bearing in upon him that if he adhered to his philosophy of concentrated egoism, all he could hereafter gain would be but in greater degree what he already had.

"But, after all," he mused, half aloud, "for a man of my sort, power is the only thing worth living for. The trouble with me is that God—if there is a God—made me too big to be contented with ordinary people and their ordinary emotions.—Come in. O, hello, Tom."

"Fine Chris'mus weather we're havin', Mr. McAdoo," said Haggin, who was the intruder. Like the other "boys," he always called Bob "Mister" nowadays.

"Fine enough, I guess. Can I do something for you?"

"O, no," Haggin answered, with ponderous bashfulness. "I only dropped in to say 'Merry Chris'mus' to ye."

"Very good of you, I'm sure, Tom." Bob's tone was anything but enthusiastic; yet he was surprised by a faint glow of pleasure at the ex-pugilist's greeting.

There was an awkward silence, at length broken by Haggin. "Ye hain't been down to the saloon lately."

"Why, no, Tom. I've been too busy. Anything new?"

Haggin jumped from his seat, as though he had been shot.

"Hanged if I hain't 'most forgot. Been intendin' to tell you all week, but buyin' Chris'mus gifts fer the missus an' the kids I forgot. Smith's been raisin' a big howl about not gettin' back to the legislatur'. Says he oughter git another term. Goin' round among the boys an' kickin' like a mule."

"Can't help that. I promised Stoughton, and he goes."

"Of course. You say so, and he goes. Smith's kickin' ain't doin' him no good. The boys just laughs at him an' tells him to take orders an' shut up an' that he hain't no right to hog his job anyways. 'Tain't him that's raisin' the trouble, but a young feller named Remington. An' he ain't no slouch, you hear *me*. He's the feller I told you about came down to the Liberty Hall meetin' last campaign. The boys was waitin' an' growin' impatient, until 'long about nine o'clock in comes a tall young feller, regular kid. Good looker, with long, curly hair an' a dashin' kind of way. An' swell—? He made me feel like a glass fact'ry, an' I had on me hunderd-dollar suit, too. He steps up to me an' says, 'Mr. Chairman, my name's Remington an' I'm here to make a speech.' At that the boys sets up a yell, hootin' an' guyin' him like four of a kind. Swell chap doesn't say a word, but offs with his overcoat an' sits on the table with his hands in his pockets, laughin' as if he had a good joke on somebody else. Fin'ly the boys lets up fer lack of wind. Then he starts in an' tells a story fit to make you bust. The boys laughs hard until they begun to see the point was on them. Then he gives 'em the worst tongue-lashin' you ever heard. I thought there would be trouble an' was gittin' ready to keep the peace, when one of the boys sings out, 'You're all right, kid.' An' damn *me* if they didn't cheer him louder than they'd guyed him. Then he talked fer near an hour. An' talk! Say, that kid had 'em all tied in a knot. When he was through, they all crowded up to him an' wanted to buy him drinks. O, he's a corker, an' no mistake!"

"Well, what of him?" Bob interrupted Haggin's flow, somewhat impatiently.

"He's takin' the Smith end of the row. Lives in the Seventh—Stoughton's own ward, you know—gets himself elected precinct chairman—how, I don't know. Goes to ward committee meetin', officer-electin' night. Gets himself elected ward chairman—how, I don't know. An' now he's goin' round sayin' 'tain't fair to turn Smith down this trip. He's gettin' the boys stirred up some, too."

"Why didn't you send him to me?"

"I did try to. He said, 'You tell Bob McAdoo to go plumb to thunder. If he wants to see me, let him come to me.'"

"You call the district committee together Monday. I'll fix him," Bob promised grimly.

"Can't you make it Tuesday? Monday's Chris'mus."

"What of that?"

"Well," Haggin explained apologetically, "the boys like to be off Chris'mus, you know, with the kids."

"Can't help it. I've got to go out of town Tuesday. Make it Monday night."

"All right," Haggin assented regretfully. "I suppose you'll have to turn the kid down. I hate to do it, though. He's such a corker. Well, I must be goin'."

"Wait a minute, Tom." Bob sat down and filled out a check. "Here's something for Christmas."

"What! *You* givin' Chris'mus gifts?" Haggin took the check in amazement.

Bob's face burned red at something implied in Haggin's words. "Why not?" he retorted gruffly. "You need another diamond, Tom. Here's another for the boys in the Fourth. They haven't found much pickings lately."

"How d'you know I won't keep it, too?"

"Nonsense, Tom! I know you."

Haggin swallowed hard. "Mr. McAdoo," he said awkwardly, "you're a man. I'd ruther hear them words than git the check. I hain't words to thank you. Merry Chris'mus!"

"The old man givin' Chris'mus gifts, an' tellin' me he trusts me!" he murmured to himself in the corridor. "Hanged if he ain't changin'! Hanged if I don't believe he's got bowils, after all!"

Bob stood staring at his check-book. Finally he sat down and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Now I wonder why I did that? I have always said giving Christmas presents was a foolish institution. I hope I'm not becoming like other people."

He propped his feet up on the desk and smoked ruminatively. At times he frowned, as though at some distasteful thought. At last his cigar burned out. The clock on his desk pointed to the hour of mid-afternoon. He sprang to his feet.

"All of which is damned nonsense!" he exclaimed in a tone of disgust, although *apropos* of what he did not indicate. "Nevertheless, since I have been foolish for once, I might as well carry it to the end by getting something for the Flinns. *They've* earned it, that's sure."

He closed his desk with a slam and, putting on his overcoat, went out into the Christmas atmosphere.

CHAPTER II

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

BOB walked hastily through the crowded streets, half ashamed of his errand and yet—he confessed to himself—recklessly enjoying this abandonment of his principles (he called them "principles") as he had enjoyed nothing since the days of his school-boy insurrections. He came to a jewelry store and, entering, took his place in the long line of holiday customers who were lined along the show-case. A young man beside him nodded. "How do you do, Mr. McAdoo?"

Bob returned the nod carelessly. He was growing used to being addressed by strangers.

A dapper clerk bustled up to him. "What can I show you?" he asked politely.

Bob frowned in perplexity. "Well," he said slowly, "I hardly know."

The young man beside him laughed heartily. "Is there then one thing the great McAdoo doesn't know?"

Bob turned on him sharply, fixing on him the cold, steely glare that even MacPherson feared to meet. The young man returned it with a quizzical smile.

"Yes, one thing—how to take impertinence."

The young man laughed again. "I've heard of your acrid humor. Here, you'd better let me attend to this job for you. You're out of your element and I'm at home at it."

Bob grinned, in spite of himself, at the young man's gay assurance. "All right. Go ahead."

"Whom is it to be for—a lady?" the young man inquired briskly.

"Two, and one man."

"Any limit?"

"No."

"Let's take up one of the ladies first. What's she like, young or old, complexion dark or light, slender or plump? And what sort of jewelry does she affect?"

"She's not young. Hair red. Complexion—well, red, too. She's not plump—she's fat."

"Ah! I see—Mrs. Flinn."

"What do you know of Mrs. Flinn?"

"I know a good deal of *you,*" the young man smiled quizzically again. "We want something gorgeous. A ring, I should say—something in diamonds and rubies. Let's see what you have."

The dapper clerk brought a tray on which precious stones glittered in all colors of the rainbow. The young man examined and rejected many, critically and in cool disregard of the clerk's suggestions, while Bob, half amused, half angry with himself, looked on, silent. At last a ring, set with a large ruby and two fine diamonds, was set aside.

"We'll take that," the young man decided.

For Molly Mehaffey and Patrick—he seemed entirely familiar with Bob's home relations—he chose respectively a very pretty pearl pendant and a silver cigar case. This done, he laid the three purchases in a row before him and surveyed them critically.

"There," he said finally, "I think those will help make a very satisfactory Christmas for the lucky ones. But aren't you forgetting something?"

"For Miss Flinn? Not here. I'm much obliged to you, though," Bob said, as he filled out a check that ran into four figures.

"O, it's been a pleasure, you may be sure," the young man replied pleasantly. "I like to spend money, even if it is some one else's."

When they left the store, the young man turned up the street with Bob in the matter-of-fact way of one whose company is justified by lifelong acquaintance. Bob, grimly amused, permitted it.

"It takes Christmas time to make a fellow expand. There's a lot in this 'good-will to men,' after all. For instance, that fat duffer there, with his arms full of packages and a grin spread all over his person. Fifty-one weeks in the year he never has a thought higher than his stomach, I'll bet, but to-day he's happy all through, because he is going to give things to others. That's what I like about Christmas. People rise above their petty cares and for a change do a fine thing in a fine, free-handed way. When you come to think of it, it is inspiringly dramatic."

"It's nonsense. I don't believe in giving Christmas presents. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent this week in this city by people who have trouble scraping enough together to make ends meet. Generosity is a weakness, in so far as it exceeds exact justice. When it means sacrifice from the giver, it's arrant nonsense."

"Were you weak and foolish, when you made out that big check?"

"That wasn't sacrifice. I could afford it."

"You're consistent, at any rate. But," he nodded shrewdly, "I am an egoist myself and I understand your point of view. But I'm a different sort of egoist and don't take it for my own. You're wrong, though. Generosity is strength, a sublime strength that is beautifully dramatic. I'll admit, it is the dramatic view of it that appeals to me. I always go broke myself Christmas time. And I positively gloat in my bankruptcy. Not because others see it as a fine thing; few people have the superfine theatrical sense I have. But because I see it so myself, and like to look on at myself in a gorgeous rôle. You don't understand that, do you?"

"I do not."

"No, of course not. You have been too busy driving ahead, trampling the world under your feet, to cultivate these finer pleasures."

"You seem acquainted with my history," Bob replied dryly.

"O, yes," the young man said, laughing. "I have made a study of your case. As I said, we're both egoists, but of different sorts. And yours is really the grander sort, I fear. You're so confoundedly big and powerful, you will never be content until the world is at your feet, kowtowing very humbly. All merely to gratify your love of your strong self. It goes without saying, you will never use your power for the sake of the world. It is characteristic of us big egoists that, although we understand, we never care to change ourselves—even if we could. I admit we are contemptible."

"There are some people who would be afraid to say these things to me," Bob interrupted, half angrily.

"O, I'm not afraid of you, you know," was the cheerful answer. And he continued, "Yours is what I call grand opera egoism. Now mine is vaudeville. I don't ask the world to prostrate itself before me. All I want is that it shall place me in the foreground, so that I may enjoy myself playing a striking rôle. I love to be in a dramatic situation, just to admire myself rising gracefully to it. Of course, the same principle underlies both our natures, concentrated selfishness, self-love. Were you ever in love?"

"Well, hardly!"

"Neither was I. It's a shame, too; I'd make such a splendid lover. I'm not a sentimentalist, though—rather a sensationalist. I love a strong sensation. I like the *feel* of doing the big, the unusual, the beautiful things. For example, there is a beggar woman. I take these two five-dollar bills out of my pocket and say to myself, 'Here are ten dollars, the sum total of my present worldly wealth. Office and room rent come due the first. I must live in the meantime, and there's no money coming to me until the middle of next month. But I will give this needy woman one-half of what I have.' "

He suited the action to the word. "Now what do you think of that?"

"Humph! That you need a keeper."

The young man laughed. "Don't you believe it. That is one of the best investments I ever made. The economy I'll have to practise will be amply repaid by the pleasure I get out of this act. I'm not really generous. But that is a pretty thing and one that comes naturally only from a generous man. I shall *seem* to myself a generous fellow and get more gratification out of the feel of it than real generosity would give.

You see? The sensation! That is why I have intruded on you this afternoon. I like the sensation of talking about myself frankly to a man who never saw me before and doesn't give a damn whether he ever sees me again."

Bob laughed loudly, he could not help it. "Well, you've got *nerve,* there's no doubt of that. I stop at this book-store."

"I'll go along. I want to deliver a homily with that laugh of yours as a text."

But this time Bob needed no aid from the talkative stranger; the present was for Kathleen. As with the discriminating eye of the book-lover Bob chose a superbly bound set of Shakespeare, the young man exclaimed,

"By Jove! I envy the one who gets this present! You love books?"

"They are my chief extravagance."

The young man surveyed him thoughtfully. "I hadn't expected it of you."

"Well," he continued, when they were once more on the street, "to my homily and your laugh. Now that was a sorry affair. It was too awkward and incomplete, the laugh of a man who considers it a luxury, not a necessity, and consequently uses it but seldom. Here is the way to laugh." He threw back his head and gave vent to a ringing, mellow laugh that was a pleasure to hear. "Now that is the chief trouble with you and your plan of existence; you don't exercise your risibles enough, literally and figuratively speaking. Let laughing stand for the little indulgences and gratifications, the rest from driving ambition, the frank friendships—the sweet things of life, in short. The lack of these cripples the possibilities of your life. Laugh more and you will be better liked."

"Have you a thousand wives?" Bob affected to jeer, although in truth he was beginning to listen intently.

"No, I have none. I am a wise man," was the swift retort. "You have accomplished more than any young man I know of. You are the third strongest man politically in the city. You are apparently rich. You have accomplished this by dint of sheer strength, leaving out entirely the question of personal popularity. That's the weak spot in your armor. Now you have chosen politics as your particular field. So have I."

"Then I guessed right," Bob said to himself, and the amused gleam died out of his eyes.

"Downright brute strength and the fear inspired by it have carried you through so far, but if you are going further you must consider the question of personal popularity. A man may boss a ward or a district, where he comes more or less into personal touch with the people, by strength of personality. But the wider the area, the thinner and less effective becomes this influence. Fear decreases in proportion to the square of the distance from the feared object, whereas popularity increases in the same proportion. The American people will fear and obey a man because of his strength as far as they can feel it directly. But they will love a shadow or the creature of their own imagination, and the farther removed the object, the more deeply they love him. Get the public into the habit of loving a man and they will keep on loving him—just because they love him."

"That's not true," Bob interjected sharply. "Do you know more about any other subject than you do about politics?"

"O, I know politics," the young man said calmly. "I know the power of money and of the big corporations and financiers whom you and I know to be the kings in politics. I am speaking of the politicians, who stand to capital in the relation of attorney to client. I have studied the big political men of our country closely, and every manjack of them has been personally popular or, at least, able to make himself an attractive public figure. In our own city take Steele for example. It was his personal popularity that held his organization together; when he died, it died. It was the lack of it that killed Harmon. It is the lack of it that will put MacPherson out within the next five or six years. It is the lack of it that will keep you out, if anything can, of control of the city, at which I shrewdly guess you are aiming."

"Perhaps you intend to capture the city yourself?"

"It is not beyond the possibilities," the stranger youth responded imperturbably. "I'll admit, though, that you might be able to prove the exception to my rule. You are so infernally strong, body and soul," he swept Bob with a frankly admiring glance, "as I have been told by those who know you, and as I feel it now when I meet you at close quarters, I almost believe you can do anything in your own way. Still, even if you can accomplish what you want by main force, it would be mighty poor strategy, when, by the use of popularity and diplomacy, you can get the same thing more quickly and more easily. A rapier is a deadlier weapon than a meat-ax."

He stopped. And Bob took the opportunity to scrutinize the man beside him, very carefully. It flashed across his mind that here was one who would attract the hero-worshiping public. He saw a lithe, well-set-up, springily carried figure; long dark hair, slightly curling, crowning a fine brow and a handsome, regular face of a slightly Semitic cast; an olive complexion, dark eyes, flashing just now in the light of debate; a finely molded chin, neither weak nor strong, and a mobile, sweetly smiling mouth—the mouth of a woman. He was attractive where Bob was compelling. It struck Bob that this young man—he was not more than twenty-five—would be likely to get as much out of life as he himself would.

"His figure is good. He is the rapier, I, the meat-ax," he thought to himself. "Is that all?" he added aloud.

The young man's tone changed to one of thoughtful, not fearful, hesitation. "Unless you change, you will never attract. You are *too* strong, too arrogant in your strength. The man who says frankly to the public, 'You are my legitimate spoil. Do this, damn you, or that, as I tell you,' will need the strength of God to conquer that public. You must cultivate popularity yourself or work with some one who is naturally popular, as Harmon did with Steele. You can't do the first; you would have to be made over. You will not earn popular regard by setting yourself aside and fighting the public's battles, you are too thoroughly the egoist. You need to work with and through a man who will give your movement a popular tone. In fact, you need *me!*"

Bob threw back his head and laughed harshly. "I'm a politician, not a variety showman, you know."

The young man betrayed no sign of irritation. "I'm not a rattlebrain," he said with quiet confidence. "You are too good a judge of men not to know that. I am a popular man. I say that without vanity, merely as a fact that has been demonstrated. Just as I would say, 'This is a house.' Just as you would say, 'I am strong.' There is no particular reason for it other than that I was born with a talent for popularity. I have cultivated that talent to the best of my ability, as a man should always cultivate a talent. I always succeed in making people like me. I sometimes think I should like to have an enemy, just for the sensation. When I am as far along as you are, I may permit myself the luxury. At present, however, I can't afford it."

Bob did not laugh. The naïve candor of the young man's statement was impressive. "So you think I could use your popularity?"

"I don't like the phrase. Say, I could help you. There is no doubt of it. I lack certain things—good generalship, talent for organization and the cool, dogged, fighting spirit—while standing alone. But to a man who possesses these I can be invaluable. As I said, I am popular. I have the dramatic temperament. I should make an attractive public figure. Also I am an orator. This is my other great talent, and I have developed it, too. While I was at the law school in New York, I made many speeches for the practice, in their city politics. They will tell you of me down there. Even now, when I am, of course, far from the height of my powers, I can sway audiences as I suppose few men in this country can."

"So you propose an alliance with me?"

"Why not? I have studied the big men of this city very carefully and have decided that you are the one who can help me most and whom I can help most. You have what I lack. I have what you lack. You have already a strong grip on local affairs, you are in the position to exploit my talents at once, to give them an immediate value—to both of us. Furthermore, I am prepared to like you—which is unusual. You and I," he declared with a confident smile, "were made to work together. We *fit.* Already you prove that you half like me by listening as you have done to what you consider impertinence. Consider that if I have been tolerated one-half hour by *you,* there is every chance that I can influence ordinary men."

"In other words, you ask me to share with you what power I already have, to take you into a full partnership at once? That's modest, I'm sure."

"No, no! I don't want any of your power. Keep it all. I will help you to add to it. But if I help you to increase it, it is only fair that you use it to give me the public life for which I am fitted. I don't ask a full partnership. I only want to be made your chief lieutenant, your officer in the field.

"But think it over," he concluded. "There's no hurry. Take your time and see if you don't find something in the proposition. I stop at this church to meet a girl who is at choir rehearsal for to-morrow."

For a few moments Bob stood silent before him, staring at him fixedly, his jaw tight shut. He suddenly found himself resisting something utterly strange to him. He was a bold man himself; he admired audacity in others. He simulated a scorn he did not feel.

"That's very kind, I'm sure," he said, with a cutting sneer. Then he added contemptuously, "Do you think for a moment that I—that any man in his senses—

would seriously consider such a rattle-brained proposition?"

The young man's face reddened, but his head went up proudly, defiantly. "I didn't mean to be flippant. But you will," he cried. "You will consider, and you will *accept*. You know, as I know—or you can easily find out—that what I have said is true. But understand that if you accept, it must be on a basis of equal friendship. For a friend who will help me, in turn I will give myself and my talents freely. But I will *not* be used as a tool by one pretending—"

Bob laughed, in spite of himself. "Why, you are prescribing conditions! Did *I*—or did *you*—suggest this—er—partnership, would you call it?"

"No, I'm not asking a partnership, but a *friendship*, Bob McAdoo! Do you know what that means? But no, of course you don't, you poor, blind egoist! But I will not be used as a tool by one pretending a friendship he does not feel. I'm not dependent on you—you've enemies in this city, and they realize my value. Whether you accept or not has no bearing on my future. I believe in my star, as you must believe in yours. What I want of the world I shall take. But I prefer to have it from you. And you will accept! For I like you, Bob McAdoo, and when I like a man he can't help but accept my friendship.

"But," he added, his voice dropping again to the ordinary conversational tone, "I have forgotten to tell you my name. I am—"

All the primitive savagery in Bob's nature suddenly rushed to his aid in his struggle against that new inward something. A hot desire filled him to take in his strong hands the handsome youth who with such arrogant certainty demanded his friendship, to crush him, to hurt him until he should cry for mercy.

"You are Paul Remington," he cried roughly. "I know you. There can't be two such idiots. You're the fellow who is trying to fight me in my district. You fool! What do you suppose I care for your ranting theatricals, your star, or your boasted popularity? If you had come to me first, I might have listened to you, but you chose to fight me. Now you must take the consequences. You may as well give up all hope of political rise in this city, young man, for it's my business to keep you down. No man fights me and lives!"

The young man answered with a fearless laugh. "You indulge in ranting theatricals yourself, I think. But you can't do it. You're not God, you know. I'm not afraid of you, Bob McAdoo. *Au revoir!*"

He turned and entered the church, leaving Bob to stand staring at the swinging door.

In the vestibule Remington stopped and covered his face with his hands, the woman's gesture.

"Not afraid of him? What a pose! I was fearfully afraid. But he didn't know it. I had the courage of my pose! But he will accept—I saw it. I believe in my star? No, but I believe in *his!* I will hitch my wagon to a star—his star. And, please God, he will not regret it."

He took a step toward the inner church, then stopped again.

"And that's a pose, too. Good God! Shall I never be rid of this habit? I never know myself when I am acting and when sincere. I'd like to be absolutely, undoubtedly sincere once—just once—for the sensation!"

CHAPTER III

CHRISTMAS SCENES

AN OLD-FASHIONED Christmas came that year, the city covered with an unaccustomed robe of purest white; the sky swept clean of cloud and smoke by the blustering western wind; the sun shining brilliantly, a Christmas gift to the Steel City; the air electric with the keen snap of ten degrees above zero. You felt Christmas that day, the joyous relaxation, the pleasurable excitement.

Yet the spirit of good-will was not universal, as three men in that city could have testified. They shivered in a down-town office and glowered hatefully at one another. They were distinguishable by their chins. Number One possessed a square, clean-cut, aggressive chin. Number Two's was narrow and protruded viciously out from the mouth, like a hook broken sharply off; you felt that it would have reached the nose, had it not met some untoward accident. Number Three had no chin at all worth considering.

"It's no use talking," Number One was saying firmly. "I won't have it. He must never come to trial."

"But, heavens! man," Number Two responded impatiently. "The man's so plainly guilty. It's a flagrant case."

"Guilty as hell," Number Three added. "Caught with the goods on. I couldn't help getting a conviction if I tried."

"All the more reason why he mustn't come to trial."

"But think what it means!" Number Two argued, his hook-like chin working excitedly. "Haven't we enough to face just now, with the whole city sore as boils over that franchise business? Everybody knows all about this thing. The newspapers have published beforehand the testimony of the bell-boy who overheard him offering to take the bribe. They have published facsimiles of the check, signed by Henderson and indorsed by Malassey. Every morning there is a fresh editorial howling for his conviction. The whole county is yammering, 'Malassey must go to jail!' Our credit is a little strained, as it is; we must do something to placate these howling fools."

The square chin hardened. "Let 'em yammer. Malassey shan't be the goat. I'll not have it."

"Then let him skip out for a couple of years. You and I can pay his expenses."

"No," said the square-jawed man. "That's not my way. He stays right here in the city."

"I can't see," Number Three exclaimed petulantly, "why you're so positive about it. What is it to you whether he goes to jail or Halifax?"

"Because he belongs to *me*. And no man of mine is going to be a scapegoat for others' sins."

"But what about my friends?" Number Two demanded. "What about Jim here?"

"Yes, what about me?" whined the man with the inconsiderable chin. "Why, only this morning the *Leader* denounced my administration as 'the most incompetent, corrupt and easily manipulated the district attorney's office has ever known.' Nice Christmas gift, isn't it?"

"I guess the *Leader* is about right," said Number One with an ugly sneer.

"That's as much your fault as mine," the district attorney retorted surlily. "Most of it has come through keeping your damned, grafting heelers out of the penitentiary, where they belong. And if I let this thing slide through, I might as well go and bury myself, for I'll be dead forevermore."

"You should have thought of that before you stirred up the matter," said the man with the square chin, keeping his eyes on Number Two.

"What do you mean by that?" Number Two growled.

"Bah! MacPherson, I'm not a fool. Do you think I haven't seen through your scheme? You're trying to discredit me through Malassey, because he's my councilman. O, don't bother denying it. You couldn't convince me. You aren't a good liar. I know you, MacPherson, and how you have been trying to create a sentiment against me in the city and trouble in my own district. But this is one trick you lose, that's sure. Either this indictment is pigeonholed—or you fight me." He brought his clenched fist savagely down on the desk.

"I'm not afraid of you," MacPherson snarled.

The square-chinned man laughed harshly. "That's another lie! You *are* afraid of me. You wouldn't be worth the powder it takes to blow you up, if you didn't have me and the Sixth's majorities, while I can go out and get the old Harmon crowd together and beat you all along the line day after to-morrow. I don't want to do it, but if this trial goes on, I *will.* Now put up or shut up! Is Malassey tried?"

There was silence a minute.

"No!" The monosyllable sounded more like a wolf's bark than a human voice.

The square-chinned man laughed again. "All right. There's a good deal of profanity packed away in that 'no.' Save it until I'm gone." He put on his hat and left the office.

"My God! what a Christmas!" moaned the district attorney.

"How I hate that fellow!" MacPherson snarled wolfishly. "Some day I'll get him where I want him. And then—" His distorted face was not a pleasant sight.

Outside, the other man was saying to himself, "It's war to the death from now on, until one of us gets the other. And I don't think I'll be the victim. I almost wish he had refused, then I should have had an excuse to break openly with him. I'd do it, too, but—this is weakness. Build slow and strong. I'm glad there is to be fighting, though. It will help to kill this devil of restlessness."

In a secluded corner of the city's most fashionable restaurant sat a man and a woman at early dinner. They were evidently brother and sister, having the same dark hair and eyes, the same regular features of the same slightly Semitic cast. The man was talking.

"And so I laid hold on the man who has life by the throat. Now what do you think of your most unworthy brother?"

"No one but you would have done it. What audacity!"

"Why not? I can't afford not to be audacious. It is the only rôle that suits me."

"Ah! But will you win with all your boldness? You say yourself that he threatened to crush you."

"Of course, he resisted. Yielding is a lesson he hasn't learned yet—quite. You should have seen his bulldog jaw clench and his steely eyes flash as he cried, 'He who fights me dies!' Ye gods, but he was a terrible figure of raw, elemental strength! I trembled myself, although I laughed at him. But he was fighting me, and it took all his strength to resist. I felt it instinctively. That is why I scent victory ahead. I am the first who has ever called all his forces into action."

"But if, as you say, he is so strong and so intensely selfish, then perhaps his strength and selfishness may form a shield proof against even your shafts."

"My dear sister, the doubt is unworthy of you. Rest assured, he will yield. To-night will prove me right."

Her eyes rested proudly on him. "Yes, the doubt is unworthy. When did you ever fail? Who can resist the witchery of your magnetism?"

"It is witchery, isn't it? But we come rightly by it. Strange, how, after five generations of Puritanism, our breed should cast back and produce in you and me copies of our Hebrew ancestress! Glorious woman! Who fell in love with a Puritan, abandoned her people to marry her lover, deserted her husband to go on the stage and bring the world to her feet. A magnetic sensationalist. She lived! And we are her children."

The woman shuddered. "Don't! I always think of her tragic disappearance from the world and her hideous end. Perhaps that is part of our heritage, too."

"Nonsense! Of what use are five generations of Puritanism, if not to save us from that? But even if it were not so, what of it? While she lived, she lived! As I shall, through him."

"Ah! but will you be good for him? Even in our philosophy there is the theory of equivalents."

"Yes. Of course, that isn't why I seek him—you and I have no illusions. But I like him and, please God, I will be a good friend. I will teach him our philosophy. My friendship shall discover to him the tremendous appetite for life hidden away in the big soul of him. Through me *he* shall live."

"Let us hope so. And that you aren't playing with fire. But, to change the subject, what of your Lady of Dreams?"

His mobile face became dreamy, and he murmured, half to himself.

"It is strange. I have the feeling that I am coming nearer to her. She grows more real to me every day. I can see her now, with her glorious hair, her sad eyes, and her beautiful cold mouth with the tinge of bitterness. She will come, of that I am certain."

The woman shook her head, smiling.

"You're a strange mixture, Paul." She leaned forward and looked into his eyes searchingly. "I wonder why we are as we are, you and I?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "God knows! But come, enough of serious things. My watch says, just one-half hour until I must start for the scene of battle, enough to see you in your train—if you insist on leaving to-night?"

"I must. I have my battle to fight, across the seas."

"Then a toast. To our fortunes! And may life always glow red for us!"

"Ah! I'm afraid of that toast! And of our battles!"

But they touched glasses and drank.

"The refusal of the district attorney to prosecute this flagrant crime is an outrage upon the county. The audacity of our bosses in refusing to yield to the popular demand in this matter would be inexplicable, were not the ruthless hand of a certain one of our politicians plainly felt. . . . It is time this man was unseated. It is not the first occasion on which he has defied, and forced others to defy, public opinion, boldly and openly and with the brutal disregard of others' rights characteristic of the bar-room bully. He is a disgrace to the community. Of all the men prominent in the public eye we know of none who stands forth so repulsively as does Robert McAdoo. He represents all that is brutal and shameful in American politics."

In the fading twilight the man against whom this attack was directed read the bitter words, the concluding paragraph of an editorial in the evening *Press*. When he had finished its perusal, he tossed the sheet aside and leaned back in his chair, a faint unpleasant smile playing across his face.

"He has begun already. The fool! He forgets he is attacking himself as well as me. To such lengths will passion carry a man!"

There was a knock at the door, and a young woman burst into the room. At twenty-eight, Kathleen Flinn was still unmarried; to the wonderment of her many friends, since she seemed made for the home-life. She was beautiful, with the beauty of health and of the cheery, unselfish spirit which made her a woman among women. In the Fourth Ward school, of which she was principal, thanks to Bob's political influence, a thousand boys and girls loved her with an unwavering devotion they did not always accord their parents. The older generation of the Fourth maintained the same attitude toward her, less frankly perhaps; trouble and sickness must seek well-hidden corners indeed to escape the searching eye of "Miss Kathleen." She always remained a mystery to Bob McAdoo.

"What a shame!" she cried sympathetically, holding out a folded newspaper.

"So you've read it, too. Nice Christmas gift, isn't it?" Bob smiled in amused contempt. "I wouldn't care about it, if I were you."

"Don't you care yourself?"

"I? Why, no. I know the animus of the editorial, and the man who inspired it."

"But think of the many who will read and believe it."

"Then you don't think it true?" He might have asked her belief in the theory of evolution, so coolly impersonal and uninterested was his tone.

"No, I don't," she answered warmly. "I see the fineness in your strength, and know you don't 'represent all that is brutal and shameful in American politics.' It hurts me to read such cruel, unjust abuse."

"You are a wonderful woman, Kathleen. Always making others' troubles your own. No wonder people love you!"

"Ah! but it isn't general interest in people, it's my particular interest in you, that makes me angry at this."

"And why should you care about me?"

"Because I know such attacks are apt to make themselves true, by embittering the man assailed. And because I think of your wonderful possibilities. No, don't laugh, please. I know what you are now, but I know, too, what you will become. I know that some day you will be and do far more and better than you have yet set your eyes on."

"Ah! then you care only because of what I shall do when this mysterious change takes place? It isn't that you like me?" Again his tone voiced a purely impersonal inquiry, with no hint of disappointment in it.

"Why should I?" she laughed frankly, with a girlish toss of her head.

"Why, indeed?" he smiled back, pleasantly for him. "But won't you sit down?"

"You were slow giving the invitation!" she said gaily. "But I accept, for a few minutes. Because I want to thank you for the *beautiful* books."

"Don't," he said, again pleasantly. "I still owe you more than I can pay." She did not try to thank him further.

For some minutes they sat silent before the fire, the man losing himself in contemplation of the dancing flames, or what he saw therein. Kathleen observed him furtively, with the sensation of beholding a stranger. Whether from the softening effect of the firelight, or of his relaxation, or of his unexpressed thought—she did not attempt to analyze the cause—he seemed strangely less harsh than she was used to see him. His face was merely strong, without its suggestion of cruelty; his eyes, too, in his abstraction, lost their customary coldness. She had never known him so—she cast about for the word—*human*. It was not her habit to visit him in his library. She had come this evening only on a sudden sympathetic impulse; she did not regret her impulse.

He stirred from his contemplation of the fire.

"I have to be honest with you, Kathleen. You were wrong a bit ago, when you said I wouldn't defy public opinion without a valid reason. I happen to have a good reason in this case. Or, at least, it seems so to me. The man back of the whole proceeding hates me; he is seeking to discredit me through the weakness of another man. I spoiled his pretty scheme. This editorial is his sneaking way of venting his spleen. He does it only because he knows I can't well break with him now. Though he hurts me less than himself. However, I don't always have so good a reason—in your eyes, at least—for my actions. I never offered a bribe, legally speaking, because it has never been necessary. I would, though, if occasion demanded. Last spring, in that franchise business, I defied public opinion, when no one else dared to do it, because I needed the money in it. You are perhaps revising your opinion as to my fineness. If to trample carelessly over the desires of others is brutal and brutality is shameful—and it probably is, judged by your standards—then I do represent all that is brutal and shameful in American politics. It is true—that editorial, but—I don't care."

"Ah!" Kathleen leaned forward with a quick, impulsive movement. "Don't you *want* me to like you, to believe in you?"

"I'm not sure." She laughed outright at his evident hesitation. "But you are an exception. Long ago I determined to make my struggle alone. My own weight was quite enough, without adding that of others, as, being what I am, I inevitably must if I assumed the responsibilities of friendship. In other and uglier words—since I was placed here in the eternal scramble, by a power over which I had no control, I proposed to get on top, no matter over whom I had to scramble. And I didn't propose to put myself in relations where I should hesitate to trample over any one, when desirable. There you have it. I never put it more frankly to myself. Very brutal, no doubt, according to your standards. Though I've noticed that to one's own eyes strength in another is brutality, just as selfishness in another generally consists of thwarting one's own selfishness."

"And does the theory satisfy?" she asked. "You put it in the past tense, I notice."

He frowned impatiently. "I should lie to any one but you, Kathleen. That's the worst of it. It brings the desired results, but it doesn't satisfy—you're Irish enough to understand that, I hope? Because the struggle is so ridiculously easy. Really, the world is a very feeble opponent to a man who sets about its conquest determinedly and systematically. It is just about able to make it interesting for an ordinary man. It's child's play for me. Sometimes I long for a *real* struggle, one that would test my muscles to the limit. That's one reason why I defy public opinion so often—it increases the difficulties and gives me the chance to fight. Being so brutal, I naturally like fighting."

For some time Kathleen stared thoughtfully into the fire.

"I suspect the only force that will give you the supreme test you desire is—yourself," she said at length, and then demanded abruptly, "Why don't you abandon your theory? You admit it doesn't satisfy?"

He laughed unpleasantly. "I'm as confidential as a sentimental girl, to-day. I may as well go the whole length. Because I'm afraid."

"Bob McAdoo afraid!" Kathleen's irony never carried a sting.

"Yes—of Bob McAdoo."

She arose and looked down on him, pityingly.

"Bob, you make me understand, as I could never understand before, the horror in the meaning of a certain word—"

"Don't mind me. I'm in a humor for truth-telling just now."

"Loneliness!"

Without waiting for his reply, she left the room. Bob stood gazing at the door through which she had disappeared.

"Loneliness! I didn't expect that. But it hits close. God! I *am* lonely. And yet—! That woman is a living denial of my theory. Hers is the exact opposite—service, always service. And she gets far more out of life than I with all my brutality, or a thousand Remingtons with his love of sensation. Nevertheless, I am far—humph! How trite phrases will slip into a man's thoughts! I was about to say, 'far from the kingdom of God!' "

For that evening Haggin's back room had assumed its official habit. This was accomplished by consolidating the three small tables into one. Around this oblong sat a dozen men. The smoke from their cigars filled the room with a thick haze through which the faces peered mistily. A green-shaded student lamp had been placed in the center of the table, to permit the secretary to take notes more easily. But the secretary had forgotten his notes. Nor were the men now smoking; they had refrained so long that their cigars, mechanically held, had ceased to fume. The men leaned forward over the table, silent, amazed, intent on the words that fell from the lips of a very handsome young man in evening dress—the first garment of that sort to penetrate the fastnesses of Irishtown, as one may well suppose. It was not what the speaker said that held his small audience spellbound, though the simple words—carefully prepared, however—were an effective bit of pleading. It was the startling fact that this young "silk-stocking" had dared to defy the "old man," and that his nerve had shown no diminution when confronted by the boss in person. Across the table from the young man sat Bob McAdoo, motionless and inscrutable as the sphinx, his mouth twisted in a peculiar, wry smile.

The plea ceased. All eyes were turned to the boss. "Is that all?" He spoke quietly, but the words somehow carried a perceptible sting. The young man flushed and sprang impulsively to his feet again.

"No," his voice rang out, "it is not all. There's one thing more—for you, Boss McAdoo! You've given your orders that Smith be set aside and Stoughton be given his place, for no good reason, but wholly arbitrarily, just because it happens to please you. These other fellows may obey your orders. They almost certainly will. But so long as I am on this committee, my ward votes for Smith. You promised to crush me, if I stuck to this. All right! You'll find I can take a lot of crushing. Your brutal threats don't frighten me—*you damned bully!*"

Bob rose slowly to his full height. The rest of the committee, too, stood up, involuntarily. Bob's eyes were glued to the handsome, flushed face across the table. The others' glances were fastened on his big right fist. "Ha!" they breathed, as they saw it clench convulsively. More than one face went pale; they expected nothing less than to see a murder done. But Bob's hand unclenched immediately. He reached forward and removed the green shade from the lamp. The harsh, white glare, freed from its prison, flung the face of the defiant man across the table into sharp relief. Bob continued to gaze sharply into Remington's eyes, the peculiar, wry smile persisting. Without dropping his eyes, Remington took from his pocket a silver case, selected a cigarette and lighted it. There was no perceptible tremor in his hand during this theatric performance. For a few long-drawn-out moments they stood thus, locked in a battle of the eyes. Then Remington laughed aloud, insolently.

"Put the motion," Bob commanded quietly, maintaining his steady gaze.

"It has been moved and seconded that this committee indorse Stoughton for the legislative nomination," the chairman repeated mechanically. "All in favor—"

"Aye," said all but Remington and Bob. The chairman paused.

"All opposed." The suggestion came from Bob.

"No!" Remington's voice rang out.

"I guess that settles it, Remington?"

"It settles the immediate question," was the defiant answer.

"Meeting's adjourned." Bob motioned the committeemen out of the room.

There was a general relighting of cigars, the strength and rapidity of the puffed clouds indicating a relief that the little scene was over.

"Nothin' but a drink as high as the ceiling will do me after that," whispered one. "Reminds me of the night the old man licked Haggin."

"Me, too, only there wasn't no scrap," and there was a shade of regret in the low-voiced reply. "I thought fer a while, though, to buy flowers fer the kid's coffin. Five years ago, I'd had to, too."

"O, Remington," Bob said casually, "just wait a minute, will you?"

"Well?" he turned toward Bob with a certain graceful recklessness.

"Here, smoke this," Bob said gruffly, as he handed over a cigar. "I don't like to see a man smoking cigarettes."

Remington hesitated, then accepted it.

"And I wouldn't take this business to heart, if I were you. We have to preserve discipline in the organization, you know. There's nothing personal in it."

The handsome face flushed eagerly. "Do you mean that? Then call in the boys. I want to apologize for calling you a bully."

"No! Come now, no theatricals. You're too good a man to be wasted in such childishness."

So the descendant of the renegade Jewess won his fight.

Bob, returning home, found Kathleen alone in the library. He entered and began without preliminary:

"Kathleen, this afternoon I told you that I didn't want any friends. You remember?"

"Yes."

"I lied to you, Kathleen, when I said that."

"No, Bob, you lied to yourself."

"That's true, too. At that very moment I was fighting a longing for a certain friendship."

"I wouldn't fight too hard, if I were you, Bob."

"The other day a young chap—a fool, an ass, judged by my standards—met me on the street and, without introduction or by-your-leave, demanded my friendship. He was most theatrical and asinine—and I liked him for it! He had been fighting me politically, though he's a greenhorn. I told him I would crush him, kill him politically. To-night he continued his opposition. He took the opportunity to tell me a few things about myself which he seemed to think I had overlooked—I have not crushed him. I shall not. He—he has much that I lack. And I—you hit it exactly—I have been very lonely. I'm going to test your theory, Kathleen. Good night!"

CHAPTER IV

GROWTH IN GRACE

SO, after thirty years' walking among his fellows, Robert McAdoo succumbed to that force which we call personal attraction. You are not to suppose that he experienced immediately a complete change in his habit of thought and course of feeling. It was months before Remington dared to address Bob by his first name. The friendship, if such it could be called at the beginning, took its tone from Bob, rather than from the young lawyer—quiet and undemonstrative; with a wisdom born of instinct rather than of deliberation, the latter consistently subordinated himself to the older man, never seeking to oppose his will. And though the intimacy became closer, always Bob must listen to habit's vigorous protest against the change. It was not until Remington won his way to the legislature that the protest ceased to make itself heard.

The friendship, as those who could observe closely at last came to recognize it to their utter mystification, was good for McAdoo. Under its influence he warmed gradually, there was perceptibly less harshness in his demeanor. He never repeated his outburst of confidence to Kathleen, but he became generally less taciturn. He laughed more.

The Flinn home had for some years been in a fine old house standing in a quarter whence the tide of fashion had recently ebbed. Bob had bought it as a speculation, but finding no immediate purchaser, had moved himself and his charges into it; much to the outward pride and inward perturbation of Patrick and Norah. One evening Paul Remington entered the house and was shown into the library, where Kathleen sat alone, sewing.

"Well, my Lady Charity! Working as usual—and for what impecunious kid this time? Here's my excuse for coming." He tossed an armful of roses into her lap.

"O, you extravagant boy!" she cried, burying her face in the velvety petals. "You have more of the little graces than any one I know. But you shouldn't. You can't afford it, you silly boy." She selected one of the roses and drew it gently over her cheek.

"Which is the rose?" he asked with a gaily elaborate bow. "But you don't answer my question. For whom is the sewing?"

"For the forlornest little waif you ever saw. She—"

"Spare me the details!" he groaned. "It's enough to know I guessed right. You and I are alike, with a profound difference. Every one likes us. But there's a reason in your case, while I am a mystery."

"Whisha! You'll inoculate me with your own vanity! But," she added gravely, "mystery or no mystery, you have succeeded in one instance where I and every one else have failed."

"I'm not so sure you have failed. You can't tell about him. There are times when I doubt myself. Though I really have succeeded—you are sure of that, aren't you? And I've been good for him, haven't I?"

"Yes, you have succeeded. I pray that you may always be good for him," she said gravely.

With her permission he lighted his pipe and they sat silent before the fire for some time. He broke the silence abruptly.

"I saw *her* to-day."

"Not the lady of your dreams? And in the flesh?"

"The same! Listen—and I'll unfold a tale that will rack the very soul of you."

He paused long enough to throw a fresh stick on the fire and then resumed.

"I was standing in the depot, waiting for a fellow who didn't come—can you imagine a more disgusting place for romance? A lady dropped her kerchief. With the prompt gallantry that is one of my charming traits, I picked it up and returned it to her. 'Ah! thank you.' And she deigned to give me the hundredth part of a fraction of a coldly indifferent glance, as though I were the cement beneath her feet. Then—I turned cold and stiff with fright and wonderment. It was She—as I had dreamed her. I stood, staring like a yokel while she passed through the gate to her train. I made a dash to follow her. To be met by a blue arm with brass buttons and the prosaic demand, 'Show your ticket, please!' 'Ticket!' I said. 'I've no ticket.' 'Can't pass through then!' 'Man,' I said, 'I must. I'm the president of this railroad. I'm the governor of the state. I'm the president of these glorious United States. It's a matter of life and death. I must!' 'Can't pass without a ticket,' was all the concession I received. I rushed to the ticket agent's window. 'Ticket!' I demanded. 'Where to?' he said leisurely, as though the solar system hadn't suddenly stood still.

'Where to? *I* don't know,' I confided to him. 'First stop on New York Limited, I suppose.' He handed me a few inches of paper, I threw down a bill and, without waiting for change, rushed out to the gateman, waving my ticket frantically. 'Now will you let me pass?' I cried. 'Nope,' he answered tranquilly. 'Train just pulling out.' It was true! I sat down on a truck and spent fifteen minutes inventing new ways of expressing profound, black despair. And such," he cried, striking a tragic attitude, "is the baleful effect of modern invention upon romance. Weep with me!"

Kathleen laughed merrily. "And what would you have done, if you had made the train?"

"What would I have done, you ask? What could I have done? I would have thrown myself prostrate at her feet. 'My dear,' I would have said, 'you are overlong in coming. I have waited for you, lo! these twenty-seven years. Accept a lifetime's devotion, heart of my heart.' "

"Yes? And what excuse would you have made to the police magistrate next morning?"

"Bah! You would make an efficient railroad official, Kathleen. But strange!" His voice sank to a serious whisper. "She was just as I had dreamed her."

"You've seen her picture somewhere and adopted it in your dreams," Kathleen suggested, eminently practical.

"Perhaps," he assented, and went on in the same unwontedly grave tone. "But I prefer to believe in my dreams. She was wonderful. If only you could have seen her, Kathleen! Her hair—that glorious brown with the red-gold lights in it. And her eyes! They are so beautifully gray, so cold and yet so sad, with that something that makes you know she seeks to hide a great sorrow. The eyes of a woman who will not weep. Her mouth is like her eyes. It is perfect and yet hard, with a trace of bitterness. Ah!" he cried passionately, "it wrung my heart. She has seen great trouble, she has sounded the very depths of life, I know. I tell you I longed, I *ached,* to take her in my arms and say, 'My poor dear, come with me and I shall take you to the sunny heights.' She needs me, Kathleen, she needs me!" He turned to face her.

"Paul!" Kathleen exclaimed, startled. "You let your imagination carry you away. Come back to earth. She may be the very opposite of all you imagine her."

"No, no, Kathleen! She's not imagination. She's the realest thing in my life. I'm a horrible sham beside you real, big people, but there are three genuine things in my life: She, my friendship for you and my honest liking for Bob."

Kathleen made as if to speak, but said nothing.

"Yes?" he urged her gently. "Say it."

"Paul," she said impulsively, "forgive me. I have not always had perfect confidence in you, in your depth I mean—except when I am with you—then you *make* me believe, in spite of my ungenerous feeling about you, that you have a good, true side to you. I hate to think anything ill of those I like. Your liking for Bob *is* honest, isn't it? Because you're the only person he has ever given his friendship to, and, I think, it's a deeper friendship than either of you realize. If you were to prove false to him, he would be hopelessly embittered. Think of the evil he might do if he were to run amuck. You and he are men of different tastes and temperaments. The day may come when you may be tempted to turn away from him. You will be a true friend to him always, won't you?"

"Of course, I will," he said, smiling at her earnestness.

"Ah! no, Paul! Such things aren't always 'of course.' You're both in politics—I *hate* politics, it makes men so hard and selfish. You're ambitious. He has many enemies. And he isn't like other men. He is apt to be too—too *exacting* sometimes."

"But I *promise,* Kathleen—"

"I don't ask that. Promises don't mean much, do they? And—because he is what he is—you may find it very hard sometimes."

"But I *do* promise, Kathleen," he insisted earnestly. "And I will keep my promise, if only for your sake, no matter what the sacrifice."

"I pray it may never mean sacrifice." But she sighed.

From the outside came the sound of some one walking swiftly up the pavement to the house.

"There he comes now," Paul said. "I should know that step in a thousand. How like him it is! He is as inexorable as fate, that man. Let us keep him right!"

When Bob entered the library Kathleen and Remington were chatting brightly of her latest charity. He listened a while before interrupting.

"I just came from Stoughton. He wants to go back to the legislature."

"Yes?" Remington queried eagerly.

"I told him I had no objections."

Remington's face fell. "Ah! I had rather hoped to go myself."

"Well, why don't you try for it?"

"But you told Stoughton—"

"That I had no objections to his trying. I say the same to you."

"But if you were to come out for me, it would be dead sure."

"No," Bob said firmly. "If it's worth having, it's worth fighting for. I'll keep out and keep Haggin out. Then you and Stoughton can fight it out between you."

Remington reflected a moment. "All right," he said finally. "I'll try it."

"But remember," Bob added, "you spend no money for booze or buying votes. Nothing but legitimate expenses."

Remington looked furtively at Kathleen, who was diligently sewing, to all appearances oblivious to the conversation.

"Stoughton will, though."

"He hasn't enough to do much harm. How much have you?"

"About a thousand."

"Well," Bob said thoughtfully, "I'll pay your entrance fee to the primaries. Your thousand will cover legitimate expenses. And I'll see you get a square count."

"Isn't he the generous soul!" Remington laughed to Kathleen, who only smiled back. "It's a tough proposition you put me up against. Stoughton has been over the field already, I suppose. But I'll try it. And I'll win. In the bright lexicon of my youth there's no such word as fail."

"Don't underestimate your opponent. It's bad strategy," Bob advised dryly.

Remington went into the fight and won, to the delight of Haggin and his henchmen, who fairly loved the "silk-stocking kid." It is significant that when the returns were in, primary day, Stoughton was the first to congratulate the winner, and with downright sincerity, too. Bob proceeded to reward the generous loser by giving him the chief clerkship in his department at the city hall, a plum worth twice as much pecuniarily as the legislatorship.

The night of the primaries, Bob received the count over the telephone, Kathleen eagerly adding up the returns.

"He wins," she said when the last precinct had reported. "Now tell me why you wouldn't help him."

On Bob's face was the inscrutable, wry smile the committeemen had remarked the night of Remington's defiance.

"It was a test—for him and for me," he said quietly. "If he had lost, I would have cut loose from him. But now I'm pledged to carry the experiment through to the end. So come on, Fate! You see," he added grimly, "I'm falling into his theatrical ways already."

"Will you shake hands with me?"

"Why?"

"*You* win."

He shook his head. "I'm not sure. I once told you that I was afraid of Bob McAdoo. Despite your philosophy, I am—still afraid, Kathleen."

When Remington went to the capital for his first session, he met Mrs. Dunmeade, the governor's wife, and they became friends at once. She already knew much of Robert McAdoo, it developed; Remington told her more. As a result the boss of the tough Sixth Legislative District received an invitation to the governor's reception, an early event in each session of the legislature. He carried it to the capital with him, when he went thither, and showed it to Remington.

"Yes, I know," said the latter. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Go," Bob answered laconically.

"Whurroo!" Remington shouted. "I thought this was out of your line." And he threw himself on the bed of the hotel apartment where they were, and gave vent to a paroxysm of laughter.

"Funny, isn't it?" Bob growled, a faint twinkle, nevertheless, in his eyes. "Say, Paul, where's the best place to get clothes? New York?"

"Yes," Paul gasped, and went into another gale of laughter.

"Well, pack up. You and I are going to New York on the nine-thirty. I guess this state can get along without your highly valuable services for a few days."

Remington laughed harder still.

"Don't mind me," Bob said dryly. "Laugh away. I begin to see that humor is a good thing in this world. We need all we can get of it—as a sugar-coating for our eternal folly."

CHAPTER V

AN ALLIANCE REJECTED

BEHOLD then the "tough" boss clad cap-a-pie as fashion decrees for evening "affairs." The tailor who had filled the "rush" order was an artist in his way, and must have taken an artist's delight in fitting the splendid physique, grown less burly and more supple as the days of the mill-hand's heavy labor receded. Bob's new attire displayed to the best advantage his tall figure, carried with the unconscious grace that only perfect muscular control gives; the broad shoulders and the lines of the back converging symmetrically to the narrow waist. It may have been the effect of the wide expanse of shirt and waistcoat: whatever the reason, he seemed at once younger and more impressive. More than one that night, seeing him for the first time in this garb, revised their preconceived opinion of the man.

When he appeared in Remington's apartment, the night of the governor's reception, the young man surveyed him with critical approval.

"You'll do," he nodded. "Who tied that necktie?"

"That was beyond me," Bob confessed, "but a little of Uncle Sam's currency secured the expert services of the head waiter."

"How do you feel? A little uneasy? Rather as though you missed something and didn't know quite what to do with yourself?"

"No. Why should I?"

"O, if that's the way you feel about it, there's no reason," Remington laughed, as he turned to complete his own toilet.

McAdoo and Remington crossed the governor's drawing-room together, Bob, at least, coolly unconscious of the flutter of whisperings and noddings that followed their entrance. The governor greeted them with the fine cordiality which was one of the reasons for his wide personal popularity. He and McAdoo were old acquaintances; old enemies, too, having fought in opposing camps during several of their party's state conventions.

"I'm glad to meet you under the white flag, McAdoo," the governor said heartily. "I want you to meet my wife. Katherine, this is Mr. McAdoo."

Bob did not miss the quick glance of approval she cast over his correctly attired figure; nor did he, after that glance, regret the pains he had taken in the matter of his clothes. "Surely not 'Knockout Bob?'" she queried smilingly.

"Guilty!"

"We must change the sobriquet," she said brightly. "We shall leave that to Mr. Langton here."

She introduced Bob to a short, stout young man who looked out on the world through thick-lensed eyeglasses. Langton was a famous cartoonist from the governor's home city.

"Mr. Langton, you must take Mr. McAdoo in charge for a while. Then I think we ought to get acquainted, Mr. McAdoo."

Bob turned away with the cartoonist. "Well, what do you think of it?" Langton inquired, with a wave of his hand indicating the motley assemblage of verdant senators and promoted ward-heelers, who stood about in awkward groups, vainly trying to adjust themselves to the propriety of the occasion.

"Sort of funny, isn't it?"

"Isn't it, though? I never miss it. I come for new material, and never fail to find it. I enjoy it, too, better than anything I've had since I sat in the gallery and saw the melodrama. What kind of show did you prefer when you were a kid?"

"Never saw a play in my life."

"You don't mean it? Come now, that's too bad!" Langton readjusted his glasses and surveyed Bob quizzically; although he did not explain the reason for his regret. He went on:

"Do you see that bewhiskered old hayseed over there? The one with the patently rented dress suit, ready-made tie, no cuffs in sight. A hundred to one, he thinks he's penetrated the inmost fastnesses of swelldom and is frightened out of what little wit the good God gave him, for fear his flier in society come to the ears of his reuben constituents. 'The old man of the mountains,' the boys have dubbed him already. He's Jones, of Clarion. They must have been hitting the pipe pretty freely up there to send an old fossil like that. He'll be a mark for every one that comes along. Won't even have to buy him.

"And look at that big ruffian, with the diamond studs and Bowery walk. He's so rattled, trying to prove he isn't rattled, that he only exaggerates his natural manners—of the speak-easy variety at best. It's a crime, *I* say, to bring his sort into the presence of Mrs. Dunmeade. He's Blunker, of Wilksburg."

"Yes. I know him. *He* counts."

"Sure. That's the stuff we make our American statesmen out of. He'll go home with his pockets filled with a lot of fresh boodle. Soon he'll be boss of his city, then of his county, then of his corner of the state. He'll make a million or two. By that time his manners will be toned down somewhat and he'll go to congress to make laws for the noble republic. He'll die of delirium tremens and the political orators will eulogize the deceased statesman. That is, if he doesn't land in the penitentiary first. The main difference between him and a lot of our big men is that he appears to be what he actually is."

So Langton rattled on in caustic phrase, with the cartoonist's eye picking out the eccentricity in the personality of every Solon present and commenting mercilessly upon it. Bob was highly amused. He shared Langton's viewpoint; he knew the stuff the average state legislator is made of; he had made a few legislators himself.

"All told," Langton concluded, "about as warm a combination of rottenness and incompetency as we have ever had. I wonder that Dunmeade consented to it. I can account for it only on the theory that Murchell is trying to disgust the people, to pave the way for some of the governor's pet reforms, unless that is too Machiavellian even for Murchell?"

"You know Murchell as well as I do," Bob answered non-committally.

"They say there is one promising member, though, young Remington. He's your man, I believe. They say he has caught Mrs. Dunmeade's eye. That augurs well for his success—unless you interfere. They say he's a coming man. What do you think?"

Bob calmly ignored the question.

"I don't envy the reporter sent to interview this chap," Langton said to himself; and aloud, "What do you think of Mrs. Dunmeade?"

"They say," Bob quoted dryly, "that next to Murchell, she is the cleverest politician in the state."

"Next to Murchell! Man, she wraps Murchell around her little finger, just as she does the governor. She has made Dunmeade. That is, she has toned down his impracticable ideals with hard common sense. There's quite a romance in their lives, I have always suspected, if one could only unearth it."

"Why should one wish to unearth it?" Bob demanded sharply.

"As a newspaper man, I assert it would make great copy. As a gentleman," he added with a laugh, "I agree with you that it isn't a thing for the public to paw over. They're too fine people to have their private lives trespassed upon by the fool public. She is coming our way now."

"Speaking of angels," he addressed her with a low bow, "I was just saying, Mrs. Dunmeade, that you are the most charming woman in the state."

"Come now," she chided him laughingly, "that is too gross to be effective. Go over to that corner and break up Mr. Remington's monopoly of our few pretty girls. I want to talk to Mr. McAdoo alone."

"Look out, McAdoo," Langton laughed. "For if Mrs. Dunmeade wants anything from you, you might as well imitate Davy Crockett's coon."

With another bow he left them and made his way across the room.

"Suppose," suggested Mrs. Dunmeade, "we run away from this to the library. Unless," she added with a smile, "you would rather join the monopolists?"

"The Lord forbid!" he answered with such serious emphasis that she laughed outright.

She led the way into a large, old-fashioned room, furnished in black oak. Upon the walls hung the portraits of the governor's predecessors in office. In the big, open fireplace a wood fire was crackling merrily.

"You may smoke," Mrs. Dunmeade volunteered. "I think you will find cigars in that box." Bob leaned back in his chair with amused expectancy. It was for this he had come to the reception.

"You should feel complimented," Mrs. Dunmeade said, after a moment's pause. "Only our most distinguished guests are introduced here. Isn't it a beautiful old room? I love it—it is so fragrant of old memories. Often I sit before the fire, dreaming and wondering what tragedies—and comedies, too—must have been played here, unknown to the outside world. John calls it 'the graveyard of futile ambitions.' So many men have come here, thinking to establish their names, only to find themselves helpless puppets."

"A man's a fool to be another's puppet."

"Ah! That's easy to say. The puppet himself will tell you that. He finds it out when it's too late. Not too late for the heartache, as many of these old fellows, I imagine, could testify." She waved her hand toward the portraits.

Bob made no answer, and they sat in a silence broken only by the murmuring of the fire. After a while, he became aware that she was looking at him intently. He turned toward her quickly.

"You caught me, didn't you," she laughed. "I was trying to unearth the real McAdoo."

"And what did you discover?"

She shook her head. "I can't tell yet," she answered gravely, then she added abruptly, "Mr. McAdoo, will you tell me what you think of my husband—honestly?"

Bob looked her straight in the eyes. "I used to think him merely a shallow demagogue. That was before I knew him. Now I believe him to be a sincere but very foolish man. He has the knack of getting hold of the popular heart. He could make almost anything of himself, *if*—"

"If?"

"If it weren't for his reform notions. He's ahead of his time."

"There must always be a pioneer."

"And the pioneer is generally sacrificed to his cause," Bob said sententiously. "He does the work and sees another reap the glory."

"Yet Murchell, the shrewdest politician we have ever had, has joined forces with my husband."

"That merely proves my statement. Murchell has been considered invincible. Lately, since his open alliance with your husband, his organization has been falling to pieces. He is likely to lose his hold on the railroad. And he can't make up in popular support what he loses among us politicians."

Mrs. Dunmeade raised a protesting hand. "Please, don't say 'us politicians.' Because—one must speak right out to you, mustn't one?—I brought you in here to ask you to join forces with us."

"In my city they would call that a joke, Mrs. Dunmeade."

"It isn't a joke to you, is it?"

"It's a favorite theory of your husband's, I believe, that reform can be accomplished only through the people, never the professional politician. I'm a professional politician."

"You know the political conditions of this state?"

"Fairly well," he laughed.

"And you are content that this state—yours—which should be the greatest in the union, is the most shamefully corrupt?"

"That's sentiment. It happens to suit my methods."

"Then it counts for nothing with you that your having lived should result only in adding to the evil in the world?"

"A Steel City newspaper once remarked editorially," he answered grimly, "that I could be explained only on the hypothesis that I am totally lacking in moral sensibility."

"You are willing that the world should hold that opinion?"

"Really, Mrs. Dunmeade, I never bother myself about what the world thinks."

She studied him gravely. "I wonder, is that true? Or is it only a hurt pride that refuses to prove to the world its mistake?"

"If that were so, I wouldn't tell you of it. What do you think?"

"I don't know. If it be true that you frankly, deliberately choose the career of corruption—the editorial was wrong, you are not a moral idiot—what a monster, what an abnormality, you are! I can't believe that of any man. You haven't answered my proposal that you join with us."

"If that is all you need to set you right," he said quietly, "no."

"Why?" she demanded directly.

"I'm not bound to answer that. Perhaps because I have, as you put it, frankly, deliberately chosen the career of corruption. Perhaps because I don't believe in reforms or reformers."

"But you said my husband is sincere."

"He is. Or rather, he thinks he is," Bob answered, all his brutal cynicism finding expression. "He really desires reform. But not for the reform's sake. He'll never be content unless it is worked out through him."

"Ah!" she cried, "how you misjudge him! I tell you, John Dunmeade would gladly smash the god of Self to atoms for the sake of his great purpose. He has already made the bitterest sacrifice possible for a man like him. He has gone along with the old order, compromising and dealing, accepting little—infinitesimal!—betterments, to make a beginning, to pave the way for the sweeping reforms he thinks necessary. He has sacrificed his own approval, his own conscience, that other men might build on his foundation—and build with clean consciences. But you, of course," she said resentfully, "can never understand that?"

Bob made no answer, and for a while the two sat in silence. A log fell in the fireplace, sending up a shower of sparks. Mrs. Dunmeade turned suddenly toward Bob.

"You wonder why I talk to you, a total stranger, in this fashion," she said in a low voice. "It is because I have marked you out as one who can be a tremendous help to us—to him. It—it is part of my atonement. Even when he was a boy in college, he was an enthusiast, worshiping high ideals. And he fought hard to make politics clean. Always in the brave, open fashion that didn't accomplish much perhaps, but at least left him with the sense that he had been true to his ideals. Then he loved me. I was ambitious for him to rise. In a small, careless way I shared your philosophy then, and I tempted him with the sophistry of expediency. Because of me he made his first compromise. It didn't accomplish much, except to him personally; his opponents were glad enough to kick him up out of the way. And he never went back to his old methods. Through my influence he gave over the brave, soldierly fighting natural to him for craft and compromise and indirection. It was sensible perhaps, and he has accomplished more than he might have otherwise. But it was cruel to him, with his delicate sense of honor.

"Do you think," she continued quietly, "I find it pleasant to be called the female politician, to play a man's part in these deals and trickeries, when I could be caring for my children in my home? That is my atonement. I made John Dunmeade a trickster. I was wrong and he was right. All I can do to make up for it is to win a position where he can force some of his dear reforms. I've done a little. I made Murchell his friend. Murchell has made him governor. But even with Mr. Murchell we are so few and weak, while John's enemies are so many and so strong. All he can do during his two terms, if he should receive a second, is to build up an organization and educate public sentiment. In the organization you could help us so much," she added, looking at him wistfully.

Bob smoked slowly and thoughtfully for a few minutes. Then he threw his cigar into the fire and rose.

"I'm keeping you too long," he said. Mrs. Dunmeade rose, too.

"You're not to be moved, I see, by a personal appeal," she said, and then added quickly, "but please understand that I haven't told you this hoping a melodramatic appeal could win you, or because I am one of those women who must tell their woes. We know you. We have studied you, as we do all our politicians. I have a very definite purpose in telling you of my husband and myself. I want you to know us as we really are, because the time is coming when you will be forced to join with us."

"Forced?"

"Yes; forced. You said that a man is a fool to be another's puppet. Yet you know that *you* have been the servant of the financial ring controlling this state. You may have been content with that so far, while you have been building your strength, because while you have been playing their game, they have been playing yours. But unless I am sadly mistaken in you, you will soon find it impossible to play both your game and theirs. Your wants are too big. The very Self, which you worship, will forbid you to be the tool of other men. Then because you will not be the tool of the interests, you *must* join us."

"Suppose you're right about me and my wants, isn't it possible that they may still play my game without my playing theirs?"

She shook her head emphatically. "You can't be so ignorant as not to know that the interests play no game but their own. They must always be master; their very existence depends upon that. Either you must be their servant or their enemy."

"Then you think that, rather than play their game, I'll choose to play yours?"

"Not our game, but the game of the cause. It will be your game then—and your cause."

"Ah! I see," he said dryly. "Do many women reason as closely as you do, Mrs. Dunmeade?"

"Not many women are, like me, compelled to," she replied sadly. Then she smiled. "I add—we think better of you than you do of yourself, Mr. McAdoo."

In that session of the legislature there was but one notable feature, a corrupt practices bill, regulating the collection and disbursement of campaign funds. This measure had long been one of Dunmeade's pet schemes. A few independent newspapers came out boldly for the bill. For the most part, however, the press treated it humorously. The state at large received it apathetically. Then Murchell, who had consented to the bill reluctantly, put forth his hand and the measure was defeated. The man in the governor's mansion added another to his disappointments.

At the close of the debate on this bill Paul Remington made his first important speech in the legislature, a really fine effort. The newspapers published the speech in full, with many flattering comments on the young orator's ability. Even Bob broke over his custom and complimented Paul.

"It was a good speech," he said, when Remington returned to the city the Sunday after.

"But it did no good," Remington answered discouragedly. "The bill was lost."

"Of course. Murchell knows his business. Did you notice any wild outburst of popular approval? No. The people are asleep. They don't know, and don't want to know, how campaigns are conducted. Until the people are with them strongly, Murchell and Dunmeade can't afford an act like this. It is a good rule in checkers, when the other fellow has more than you have, never to exchange unless you get at least two for one. In the case of this bill the other fellow can afford an even exchange. When the other fellow wakes up to what Murchell and Dunmeade are after, you'll see some pretty playing, by the way."

"Then why did Murchell let Dunmeade push the bill?"

"Probably to show Dunmeade the state of the popular temper. Probably, too, as a bit of education. The bill caused a few men to think, to open their eyes. Your speech helped in that."

"You really think it received attention?" Remington asked eagerly.

"O, yes, it was a personal triumph, if that's what you want to know. Run in to Kathleen, she'll make a hero of you. I have some papers to read."

Bob laughed cynically. Yet his eyes, following the handsome figure of Remington as the latter went out of the room, softened almost to tenderness. He did not know it himself, however.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICS

IF the events of a rather long and very important period of Bob McAdoo's career are here crowded into one chapter, it is because this history has now reached the point where his political comings and goings are matters of public record. Those who care to follow Bob's career in detail are referred to the Steel City's newspapers' files of those years—where, incidentally, may be found an interesting and characteristic study of municipal politics. One is impressed, too, as by no trite sermonizing, with the force of a strong personality concentrated on a single objective, as one sees Bob's name, words and deeds filling the press of a busy community nearing the million mark in population. This period saw Bob become boss of his city.

Bob's affection for Remington precipitated the events that resulted in the subjugation of the city. The term "affection" is accurate. Bob, once the cold, the loveless, now bestowed on the younger man a liking none the less deep and intense for that it was quiet and undemonstrative. This liking was evidenced by the influence Bob exercised upon Paul's career in the legislature. Not that any orders were given; Bob merely, by wise counsel, guided his friend's footsteps around the pitfalls set for the inexperienced legislator. So that, although he often stood almost alone, Remington was found fighting boldly on the honest side of every measure. His own consummate audacity and personal popularity secured for him a recognition rarely accorded a first-term man. The uncompromising stand was possible to him, as to few others, since with Bob's indorsement his reëlection was deemed assured and he had no need to placate powerful interests.

Bob's influence may not seem so unaccountable, when it is understood that it was dictated only by shrewd, far-seeing policy. Bob knew that he who enters the political race must run as lightly as possible, and that even at that time support of dishonest measures was apt to prove a handicap to the swiftest runner; especially if the goal were, as in Paul's case, advancement in office.

"Never mind what they say, stick it out," he explained to Remington one day, after the latter had returned from a dinner with a notorious lobbyist. "The railroad and the steel people, ever since the war, have been looting this state through us politicians. So far the people have stood for it, but there's bound to be a change. The people swing from one extreme to the other. There are forces at work in the state now." He had Dunmeade and Murchell in mind. "There'll be an earthquake hereabouts some day soon and when it's over there'll be a good many political corpses scattered around. I don't suppose you're anxious to accomplish a premature demise. And besides, in a tight place, the kicker can always get more than the fellow who goes along."

Remington laughed. "Then you're discarding the meat-ax for the rapier, eh?"

"I didn't say that," Bob answered, laughing.

As for himself, Bob had no regrets for his past disreputable practices, deeming them to have been necessary to his financial equipment. Now, however, he decided that his equipment was sufficient to his needs, and the old contracting firm was dissolved. Also the Steel City was treated to the strange spectacle of the "tough" councilmen consistently voting against graft measures. Bob was not turning reformer by any means, on the contrary his plans for the future involved the use of some very questionable means; but he was unburdening himself of every unnecessary weight that might prove a hindrance in the battle he foresaw. And he was learning to make concessions.

The policy bore its fruit. Paul never defeated a corrupt measure, save in the rare cases when Murchell and Dunmeade threw the weight of their influence in his favor, but as the people gradually awoke from their long slumber he became known throughout the state as a brave, uncompromising champion of the popular rights. Bob's name ceased to be the subject of vituperative editorials (save in MacPherson's papers), and the "Knockout Bob" cartoons appeared less frequently. Once, when through Bob's influence an especially obnoxious measure was defeated in the city councils, the *Leader* actually printed a dignified, commendatory editorial. Kathleen, with pride, showed it to him. He laughed.

"Don't take it too seriously, Kathleen. But I'm afraid I'm becoming almost respectable."

The battle that Bob had foreseen came sooner than he expected; in fact, before he was entirely ready.

In the second year of Paul's legislative career and the last of Dunmeade's first term, opposition suddenly developed to the latter's renomination. An obscure judge from one of the western counties announced himself as a candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination upon a platform the principal plank of which was, "Down with the Murchell ring!" At first, the announcement was treated as a jest—by all save Murchell, who knew the judge to have been put on the bench through railroad influence. But as by magic, the judge's candidacy grew into formidable strength. The western counties' delegations, one after the other, declared for the new candidate. The judge, a man of mediocre ability, who affected chin whiskers and top-boots, made a stumping tour through the rural districts and took them by storm. Then the majority of the Steel City delegation declared for him, and Murchell called upon a famous lawyer of his city who was also attorney for the railroad. When the grim old warrior came from the interview, his usually impassive face was clouded by an angry frown.

As the judge's boom gathered strength, more popular interest was awakened in the coming convention than had been displayed in the state for a generation. The impossible seemed about to happen. Murchell, the invincible, the political wizard, the general who had never been beaten, was apparently facing his Waterloo! The judge's campaign was conducted with the beating of drums and the blaring of trumpets; the Murchell-Dunmeade camp seemed stricken with paralysis. Six weeks before the convention Dunmeade was, so it seemed to the public, hopelessly beaten. Only a few knowing ones, among them Bob McAdoo, refused to believe that Murchell's resources were exhausted.

Then the great boss executed a stroke of characteristic daring.

A month before the convention, like a bolt out of clear sky, came the governor's call for a special session of the legislature to consider the passage of laws regulating freight rates and the restriction of rebating, and providing for a committee to investigate the methods of the railroads. The knowing ones chuckled. Murchell waited.

The legislature convened, surrounded by a swarm of railroad lobbyists. Murchell was present in person. At the end of a week the bills had been passed by the senate. Two days more, and they were favorably reported by the Railways Committee of the lower house and passed the first reading. Then the railroad attorney called upon Murchell. The latter refused him an interview. Next Murchell received a telegraphic invitation from a gentleman in Adelphia to run over to that city to discuss the gubernatorial situation. The invitation was curtly declined. By the next train came the gentleman from Adelphia to see Murchell in person. He went into the interview in a towering rage; he came from it outwardly as meek as the proverbial lamb—and with hatred rankling in his heart.

When the interview, which had taken place in the governor's library, was over, Murchell sent for Dunmeade, and told him what had been said. As the governor listened, lines of suffering came into his fine face.

"It is the only thing, of course," he said in a discouraged tone. "The trick worked. But it is shameful—shameful!—to barter away the people's rights for a petty office. Why wouldn't it be better to pass the bills, push the investigation through and accept the defeat?"

"Because, John Dunmeade," Murchell said quietly, "I promised your wife to place you where you can reap the reward of your sacrifice and we haven't reached that point yet. Patience, man!" His voice changed to a gruff tenderness, and he put his hand on the other's shoulder affectionately. "It isn't like you to lose courage. The fight is just opening. Wait!"

When the convention met at the capital, the lower house was still debating the bills, nor were the final votes taken until Dunmeade was nominated. Then the bills were quietly amended so as to render them wholly ineffective. Dunmeade was subsequently reëlected.

In a full session of the lower house, whose galleries were packed with delegates and visitors to the convention who had stayed over for the proceedings, Remington made the last speech in the debate. It was the greatest speech he had yet made. With masterly skill he marshalled his facts—which, by the way, Bob had given him—evidencing the methods of the railroad and demonstrating the danger to the public in the monopoly that had been established. When in the close of his speech, at the height of a magnificent climax dealing with corporate influence in politics, he dramatically charged the railway officials with having conspired to defeat Dunmeade, the Speaker was obliged to pound his desk for several minutes before the enthusiastic applause died down. Long extracts of the speech were printed in all the newspapers of the state and found many readers. Among these was the gentleman from Adelphia who had visited Murchell.

When Remington made his dramatic charge against the railroad, Bob, who sat in the gallery, frowned; he had not known it was to be in the speech. However, though much disturbed over the rash words, he never rebuked Paul. Bob foresaw the results of the speech and began at once to make sundry preparations.

The convention was in May. Early in the following August, MacPherson went to Bob's office in the city hall.

"About this young Remington," MacPherson observed after the preliminary fencing. "I think we'd better not let him go back to the legislature this fall."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I think it better. Sackett's sore on him. He's been beefing it right along with his reform plays, and that speech on the railroad bills was the last straw. Sackett told me Remington must go." MacPherson's tone implied that Sackett's order was the last word to be said. Sackett was the president of the railroad and the gentleman who had called upon Murchell at the capital.

"Well, what of it? Remington happens to be one of the people Sackett doesn't own."

"Come," MacPherson laughed unpleasantly, "you and I know he owns us all."

Bob looked MacPherson steadily in the eyes. "I have no doubt," he said harshly, "that Sackett owns you, Mack, body and soul. But he doesn't own me, and I happen to have a bigger say in the Sixth than he has. I say that Remington goes back to the legislature."

The boss had learned to know Bob well enough not to argue when the latter had determined on a course of action, and rose from his chair.

"That's final?"

"Final."

"Beware of the hind leg of the mule," was MacPherson's parting shot.

For an hour Bob smoked thoughtfully, then he wired to Remington, who was away on his summer vacation, the following message: "Come back at once. You go to the senate this fall."

The next week MacPherson was in Adelphia and reported the substance of his conversation with Bob to Sackett.

"What kind of man is this McAdoo?" he asked. "Is he strong?"

"He's a bulldog sort, hard driver, good manager. He's strong in the Sixth, but not outside."

"I see," Sackett mused. "He can be made valuable. Don't break with him. But beat Remington. A little curbing will be good for McAdoo. He can be beaten, I suppose?"

"If we have to," MacPherson replied, inwardly cursing Sackett for forcing the quarrel on him.

Accordingly MacPherson set up a candidate for the nomination against Remington, and supplied him with unlimited funds. Bob managed this campaign himself. MacPherson's candidate was overwhelmingly beaten.

Then the word came from Sackett to MacPherson. "Get rid of McAdoo. He is dangerous."

But Bob's was no Fabian policy, to wait to be attacked; realizing that thenceforth he must fight for his political life, he boldly carried the war into the enemy's territory. Under cover of the fall elections he quietly and carefully built up an organization throughout the city; so quietly indeed that MacPherson received no inkling of his purpose until too late to hinder its accomplishment. Remembering with sardonic humor who had last used similar tactics in that city, Bob also bought control of an old-fashioned, sedate but moribund newspaper, placed it under modern management and began a series of exposures of the methods and deeds of the MacPherson ring; needless to say, nothing in these disclosures reflected discredit upon Bob's share in the old régime. Then he approached Stuart, a weak and pliable man who, however, had considerable following among the "conservative" element of the city, and offered to support him for the mayoralty nomination.

The day on which the *Bugle* announced Stuart's candidacy, Bob received a curt note from the mayor requesting his resignation from the directorate of public safety. Bob promptly complied. His successor's first official act was to summon Bob's appointees to "the carpet" and in plain terms inform them that they must work for the success of MacPherson's candidate or lose their positions. A small number timidly agreed to the boss' demands, but the majority hesitated. A few boldly declared for Stuart, accepted their discharges, and sent one of their number to inform Bob of their action.

He listened to the story without making comment.

"Why did you do it?" he demanded abruptly, at the conclusion of the account.

"Well," said the spokesman awkwardly, "you got us the jobs, you've always been square with us, and we ain't going back on you now. Besides, we back you to win every time."

"All right," Bob answered. "Your pay goes on the same until the election. After that I'll take care of you, whether we win or not."

When the interview was noised abroad, the doubtful employees at once lined up for Stuart. Bob made them the same promise.

"Bob McAdoo ain't just my style of man," said one. "But his word's good with me, you bet!" This saying expressed the general opinion very closely.

Frightened by the wholesale exodus from the MacPherson ranks, those who had yielded to the fear of losing their positions, now, after consultation among themselves, sent word to Bob that they would come out for Stuart for the same consideration the former had offered to the others.

"No," Bob turned upon their messenger savagely. "You agreed to throw me over to save your jobs. Now you've got to stick to your bargain. I'll have no quitters with me." This was not good politics, perhaps, but it was Bob.

The campaign will be remembered as long as the Steel City stands. Bob was viciously cartooned and made the subject of rancorous editorial attacks. These attacks were met by loud blasts from the *Bugle* and countercharges from a band of spellbinders who, led by Paul Remington, stumped the city from end to end. Every trick known to politicians was practised. Money flowed like water. Election boards were freely bought on both sides. On the day of the primaries hordes of "repeaters" went from polling place to polling place, where their respective friends were in control, and voted for their candidates again and again. In Irishtown, thanks to padded registry lists, many an ancient citizen who had long since passed to his reward was strangely resurrected, brought to the polls to cast a vote for Stuart, and promptly marched back to the graveyard.

The Sixth stood by Bob loyally, all the tough wards gave enormous majorities for his candidate. But, so far as the immediate contest was concerned, in vain. When the returns were counted, Stuart was defeated by less than two thousand majority. "The people are victorious!" screamed MacPherson's newspaper. Bob had met his first repulse.

When Bob heard the result, he gave no sign of disappointment. The only change in his demeanor was a tightening of the lines about his mouth.

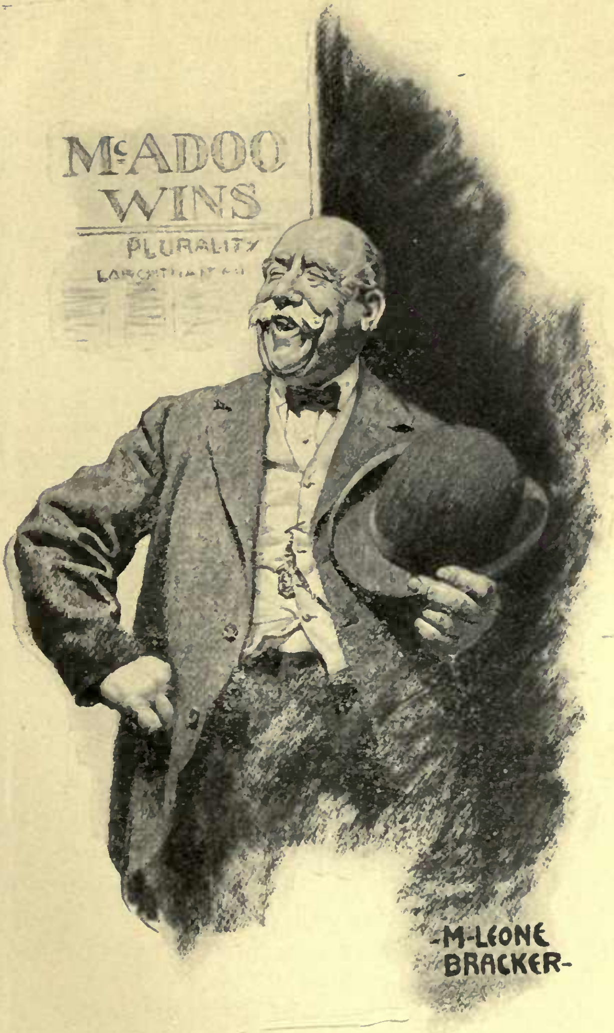
"I expected it. It came too soon," he said calmly to Remington, and added with a sudden snap of his teeth, "But it's MacPherson's last win."

Those about him now saw a change come over him, as he plunged into a campaign to turn his defeat into victory. This change was marked chiefly by a brightening of the eyes and a genuinely mirthful ring in his rare laugh. The old habit of taciturnity was often thrown off. The heat of battle was bringing to him the spring of youth which he had lately lost. And Bob was now entered upon a fight against forces beside which MacPherson and his ring were as pygmies. The heart of Mrs. Dunmeade was made glad, as she saw him compelled by the exigencies of his position into direct antagonism to the interests that were almost openly arrayed against her husband.

The city was now awakened from the lethargy in which it had lain for a generation. The continued exposures in the *Bugle,* which the opposition press tried in vain to counteract by charges that Bob himself had been an accomplice in the same misdeeds, and the knowledge gained during the recent campaign, had aroused the citizens to a realization of the fact that while they had slept they had been shamefully outraged. They were disgusted with the methods used by MacPherson in the campaign just closed—it is true, Bob had practised the same methods; but it is a characteristic of the American people to scrutinize the tactics of the victor more closely than those of the defeated—and they demanded a change. Bob had no mind to wait three years until the next mayoralty contest. Moreover, he must take advantage of the popular awakening which, with the cynical unbelief shared by many others, he deemed to be only ephemeral. So he set about the capture of the county offices, among them that of district attorney, the most important in our scheme of government, the possession of which is essential to the successful fruition of our corruptionists' schemes.

To strike for this office was to attack the chief stronghold of the interests. Bob could have had at least a promise of their support, had he been willing to accept their conditions. Before his intention became public, he was visited by an avowed agent of the combined steel concerns of the city, who offered to contribute largely to his campaign fund, if he would allow them to name his candidate. Bob, who knew that a similar arrangement had been made with MacPherson and that, once assured that the winning candidate in any case would be their servant, they would surely throw their weight against him, refused. A helpless district attorney played no part in his plans.

The McAdoo organization was extended out into the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boroughs and country districts of the county. In this work Remington, with his native diplomacy and winning manners, was an invaluable aid. The choice of a candidate for the district attorneyship was the most difficult part of the program. Bob at length found one suitable to his purpose in Martin, a brilliant and ambitious young lawyer. When Bob first broached the subject to him, Martin demurred.

"If I took it, I'd want to make a record," he said. "There's a certain line of prosecutions, for political offenses, that I'd like to push. And I don't care to be used as a club to force MacPherson into a deal and then be pulled off from the prosecutions."

"That's all right," Bob explained. "I want you to make a record. Of course, I shouldn't want you to hurt any of our people, but so long as you stand by us, you may go after MacPherson and his crowd as hard as you please. There'll be no deal in that quarter."

"That seems fair enough. But," Martin added dubiously, "have you the indorsement of the railroad and steel people? They've always made it a point to own the office."

"No," Bob said strongly, "I haven't their indorsement, and won't have it. But you and Remington can tell the people why that crowd needs the office. We'll win without their help. And when you are elected you can go after them, too, and I'll stand by you."

"I don't know what your game is," Martin answered. "But, by George! I like your style of fighting, and if you give me this opportunity, I'll be square with you!"

MacPherson's candidate had no chance to win; the popular clamor for a change was too strong. And it was a "young man's fight." The trio, Bob the young leader, Martin the young candidate, and Remington the young orator, was a magnet to draw the enthusiastic support of the young men. It was the day of the young man. That autumn a man barely forty years old made his second unsuccessful run for the presidency. Another young man was elected vice-president, within a year by a stroke of fate to become president.

During that campaign the fame of Bob's struggle spread to the borders of his state, and out into the nation. Men, absorbed though they were in the issues of a national campaign, found time to turn their eyes toward the Steel City and ask themselves the questions: Who and what is this grim, lonely figure fighting for the mastery of his city, single-handed against an alliance whose tremendous power is beginning vaguely to be realized? And what does his success portend? The only man who could have answered these questions gave no thought to them. Bob was too busy for introspection.

The nomination won, Martin safely elected, and the county patronage so disposed as to rivet the weak points in his machine—for so it must be called—Bob was in the position of a man who owns all the water around a coveted island but not the island itself. The county government was his, but the city administration, the goal of his effort, was still in MacPherson's hands, and would be, at least until the next mayoralty election, more than two years distant. Bob made tentative efforts to bribe Mayor Henry to a desertion of his boss; but Henry was loyal. Many a long hour Bob spent over the problem how to gain control of the city and complete his boss-ship. It was Remington who suggested the method.

Martin, as soon as inducted into office, began a successful series of prosecutions against election frauds and corruption in the city councils—Bob's supporters were, according to agreement, immune—that kept the pot of public resentment boiling against MacPherson's ring. Bob gave his hearty assistance to this work; it was a preliminary to the project he had in view. When he felt that the last remnant of popular support left to his enemy was destroyed, he ventured upon a bold move.

He secured a conference with Dunmeade and Murchell and to them unfolded his scheme.

"I want," he said, "an act of the legislature changing the charters of all cities of the second class, giving the mayor the power of appointment of all department heads without interference from councils; with a provision empowering the governor to unseat the present mayors at once and appoint substitutes. And I want you to let me name the man for my city."

"That is a dangerous game, young man," Murchell said. "You have the people with you now. A move like that is apt to drive them away."

"Give me the city administration and pay-roll and I'll risk it," Bob replied confidently.

After a long discussion of details, Murchell said:

"Well, if we do that for you—what?"

Dunmeade extended his hand protestingly. "No. We'll do it. Let there be no bargains for once."

At the governor's invitation Bob remained for dinner at the executive mansion. When he had left, Murchell said thoughtfully, "The immediate fate of this state is in that man's hands. If he should make a deal with the railroad steel crowd, and he'll have every temptation now, your work, John, will be infinitely harder than with MacPherson in the saddle down there. But if he should keep up his present fight, I don't believe they can beat us. Your refusal of the bargain was very generous, but— His voice as he thanked us was absolutely colorless. It might have meant anything."

"Perhaps," the governor assented, a little wearily. "But he has the reputation of never deserting those who help him."

"Yes, but he never played for so big stakes before."

Mrs. Dunmeade broke in eagerly. "John is right. He will never deal with them, and he will never betray your confidence. And not merely from gratitude. He has changed—grown wonderfully—these last four years. I felt it the instant I saw him to-day. I hope and believe he will be a great and good man."

"I believe you are right," Murchell said quietly. "He will never go over to them. Because they can have no use long for a man of his caliber and he's keen enough to know it. And I have faith in Katherine's intuitions, John," he added smilingly.

At the next session of the legislature, Bob's bill was passed. Dunmeade "ripped" Mayor Henry out of office, and appointed Stuart in his place. That night Irishtown held high revel.

How would Bob use his power? Mrs. Dunmeade had expressed one opinion. Another was set forth in a cartoon appearing in MacPherson's newspaper the morning after Stuart's appointment. Bob was represented as a hideous giant; in his outstretched hand was a cruel-looking lash. Before him cowered a trembling, shackled figure, labeled "The People." Beneath was the caption, "Woe to the conquered!"

CHAPTER VII

EAVESDROPPING; LIGHT TO THE BLIND

BOSS McAdoo threw down the papers he had been comparing and, leaning back, lighted a cigar. He puffed contentedly for a few minutes, as he thought over the events of the past few days.

It was an evening early in January. A blizzard had fallen upon the city. Outside, the wind bellowed around corners and under eaves. A foot of light, feathery snow had fallen, only to be caught up and tossed about in dizzying swirls by the gale. Even Bob, not overfond of the creature comforts, relished the warmth and cheery flickering of the flames in his grate.

From the library below came voices. They were talking about him, and he listened frankly. In this case he knew the eavesdropper would hear nothing unkind.

"He is the last man most people would choose as a subject of romance," it was Paul's voice speaking. "And yet where will you find a more romantic life? He started with nothing but a stout fist and a sturdy heart. He is thirty-six years old, rich as he wants to be, better educated than most men, almost a national figure, political leader of three quarters of a million people. Tenement brat, newsboy, mill-hand, ward heeler—Bob McAdoo, by grace of God, king!"

"Yes," Kathleen assented gravely. "By the grace of God!"

"Boss of what I believe the greatest city in the world," Paul continued musingly. "What a rôle to play! I'd give half my life if it were mine!"

The man up-stairs shook his head and smiled, a trifle satirically. "You'll never play it," he thought, "for you miss the essence of the game. I fear, Paul, that after all you aren't the true striver. It's not the mastery, but the attainment of it, that is worth while."

He gave over his eavesdropping and fell to thinking of himself and of what he had wrought.

Bob was surely growing. Once he had thought mastery—power—the only thing in life worth having. Now that he had it, he valued it only as evidence of his self-proving. If he allowed himself to exult, who shall wonder? For years he had fought, single-handed against a force that for a generation had held a great state abject. And he had conquered. He had matched courage against courage, patience against patience, knowledge against knowledge, chicanery against chicanery, and at every point he had proved the stronger. The fight was far from over. But he had no fears for the outcome. He had proved himself. What he had won he could keep. That very day he had outwitted his opponents, turning against them once more their favorite weapon of trickery and double-dealing.

Exult, Bob McAdoo! For it is the last time you shall revel in the brutal, primitive worship of the self-god. Even in the splendid sweep of your exultation there comes a sudden halting.

"By the grace of God, king! By the grace of God!"

A casual, magniloquent phrase has opened your eyes to the great fact of your life. You thought to be supreme in that life. You now find that to be an empty dream. A great force, using now this agency, now that, has driven you to where you stand. Your own strength and will are but one such agency. Jim Thompson, gentleman of misfortune, whose cruelty drove you out of the stunting tenement was another. Big-hearted Patrick, carrying you into a healthful environment, was still another. Then came Squire Mehaffey and his weak fears, and the brutal Haggin. Then the slender, fearless girl in the mills—against whose memory you still cherish that strange, personal hatred—asserting her illogical privilege. Then MacPherson and his antagonism. Then Dunmeade with his noble purpose and subjection of self. Last of all, Paul Remington, whom a strange, unaccountable impulse drove you to take into your life. For whom a great love, as for one of your possessions, in spite of yourself has grown up in your heart. To fight his fight you, who set out to live for yourself, are now irrevocably arrayed against the enemy of the multitude.

"By the grace of God, king! Then no king at all!"

No! Say rather, by the grace of God, in spite of yourself, servant of a great people in the hour of their need. So the Force puts us all into its mold compelling us to our various ends and its infinite purpose.

"To-day," said Paul, "a man took me up into a high place and showed unto me all the kingdoms of the earth and offered to give them to me."

"And what were those realms?" Kathleen laughed idly. "And would the crown fit?"

"The kingdoms were very cleverly suggested congressional, gubernatorial, senatorial possibilities, even cabinet portfolios, rich, juicy plums transferred from the public pie into my watering mouth. In short, all those things that are most desirable to an ambitious but poverty-stricken state senator."

"And for what?"

"The consideration was that I should bow down and worship and serve the tempter. To make these honors mine, all I must do is to give over my independence, sell my soul into perpetual bondage and betray Bob into the hands of his enemies."

"Betray Bob—how?"

"O, he didn't put it with such brutal frankness. I was merely to induce Bob to make an alliance with the men he is now fighting. The offer was an insult to my intelligence! As though I didn't know that the proposed alliance was only a pretext to get him into their power! They don't want an alliance with him. Their ally must be their servant. Fancy Bob any one's servant!"

"And the temptation—did it tempt?"

He hung his head. The man up-stairs strained his ears to catch the answer.

"Yes," Paul said bitterly. "O, he was very crafty—was Sanger; he had evidently studied my case. Very slyly he hinted that my reward hasn't been in proportion to my services, that I'm fit for higher things than a mere state senatorship. And it's true." He flung his head back sharply. "It's true. The crown would fit. I know my worth. And I'm ambitious. At times, when I see Bob outstripping me so rapidly, my ambition literally *hurts* me."

"Then why did you say, No?"

"Because," he answered simply, "as long as I have his friendship, I must be true to him. For I am the victim of my own plot. I set out to like him as a matter of policy, to climb in his trail. And now—" He hesitated.

"And now?"

"I love him as my own brother."

The man up-stairs felt his heart give a quick, sharp throb.

One by one Bob's crude, narrow schemes of existence were being shattered. He had thought to be supreme in his life; he found himself to be but the creature of circumstance, which is but another name for the Force. He had schemed an existence in which love should never fetter mind or heart; at an acknowledgment of affection from one whom he had called friend, hardly knowing the meaning of friendship, a strange, unaccustomed joy flooded his heart, revealing the hold that friendship had taken on him.

And, strangely, there was no resentment. For the first time in his life Robert McAdoo knew the meaning of genuine happiness and content. All his store of affection, so long repressed, flooded out in a passionate, yearning love for the handsome, magnetic Paul. He gloried in his power to win Paul's regard as he had never gloated over the strength that had successfully defied the mightiest political forces of the state. . . . A new purpose came to him. His power took on a new and higher value. With it he would royally endow this friend, defending Paul from the weakness of his own temperament, and make him great and honored in the land.

But the Force was not yet through with Bob. Another turn of the screw, and the mold pressed more closely around him.

"It has been a day of fate," Paul said. "For to-day I saw *her* once more."

"Surely not the dream lady? I supposed you had forgotten her."

"The same. I was walking along the street, there was a carriage blockade. I had the feeling one has when another's eyes are fastened on one. I looked into the carriage beside me. It was She. She turned away quickly, but not before I had looked full into her eyes for a moment. She will know me when we meet —as we shall soon. No, I have not forgotten. I shall never forget her. I can't. I wouldn't if I could."

Kathleen laughed. Her answer was lost to Bob in a sudden, fiercer rising of the wind that rattled the windows like castanets.

In response to this turn of the screw, his brow suddenly creased in an angry frown. He muttered a savage oath. Then he broke into a mirthless, ironical chuckle.

"Me! Bob McAdoo, the man of iron—save the mark!—apostle of self-sufficiency! Jealous of a woman—of a dream! Bound! Helpless!"

Resolutely striving to put away disturbing thoughts, he closed the door and set himself to work. For an hour he pored steadily over the papers before him. Suddenly he swept them aside and fell back in his chair, chuckling mirthlessly once more. The chuckle increased in volume, became a laugh, a wild, unaccountable gale of laughter that shook the body and soul of him, according with the shrieking storm that swept over the city.

The uncanny laughter subsided. "This business of living," Bob remarked, "is a joke—but a decidedly practical joke."

Later Paul went up to Bob's library and began to discuss the coming mayoralty convention, set for three days thereafter; under the provisions of the "ripper bill" the Steel City was to choose a new mayor in February. The Republican primaries had already been held, resulting in the choice of delegates, from a majority of the precincts, instructed for Bob's candidate, Hemenway.

"Bob," said Paul, "what's up?"

"What's up?"

"There's something in the air. I can feel it. I was at headquarters to-day, and every one who came in had caught the fever of restlessness. But no one could fathom it. You and Haggin haven't been visible for two days, and Hemenway is at home sick, no one allowed to visit him. What's up? My guess is an independent candidate backed by the old MacPherson crowd."

"Worse," Bob answered coolly. "Hemenway has sold us out."

Paul turned pale. "My God!" he gasped. "You mean he has gone over to MacPherson, is going to give them the administration?"

"It's not so simple as that. They're wise enough to know that Hemenway is a hard one to make stay bought—which is more than I knew," he added grimly. "He is to withdraw the day of the convention—giving ill health as the excuse—and leave his delegates unpledged."

"My God!" Paul gasped again, falling limply into a chair. "Why, man, it means—it means that they've bought over the delegates, too, and will push their man Rusling through. They wouldn't let Hemenway withdraw without first making sure of the delegates."

"Precisely."

Paul raised his hands and let them fall in a gesture of utter helplessness. "What shall we do?" he groaned. "What *can* we do?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing!" Paul cried in excited reproach. "Are you going to allow them to carry off the victory without a fight?"

"I say, nothing," Bob explained calmly, "because there's nothing more to do. It has all been done. They kept it mighty quiet—they had to—but I got wind of it night before last. They overreached themselves, as Mack generally does. They made the mistake of going to Haggin. He led them on, agreeing to everything they proposed, pocketing their money like the old grafter he is, and then came and told me. We got busy at once. We have the delegates back—and the other crowd are out a barrel of money."

Paul leaped to his feet and seized Bob's hand. "You old Roman!" he exclaimed in affectionate pride. "They can't beat you, can they?"

His face lighted up. "But what will you do for a candidate?"

"There's only one thing to do," Bob answered slowly. "We must have a man we can count on at every turn—"

"Yes, yes," Paul interrupted eagerly.

"Who has good nerve—"

"With the courage to withstand all their power."

"Who won't worry over newspaper attacks—"

"With a spirit too strong to be wounded by their malicious lies."

"And not too much conscience," Bob concluded dryly. "There's just one man in the city who fills the bill. And he is—" He paused, searching Paul's countenance keenly.

"Yes, yes," Paul's face shone with anticipation.

"Myself."

Bob turned his eyes away quickly, that he might not behold the disappointment which he knew was written on Paul's face. For several minutes they sat thus, without speaking, while the storm outside howled in fierce glee.

"I'm sorry, Paul," Bob broke the silence, gently for him. "I thought of you the first thing, but I think it better not. It would hurt you more than it could help you. The mayor of a big city always goes out of office with more enemies than when he goes in. There is the crowd of disappointed job-hunters, who are convinced that they have been unfairly treated and hate him for ever afterward. Whatever he does, there are always a lot of critics who believe he has behaved criminally. Besides, the next will be no reform administration. We've got to play politics. This trouble has shown up several weak places in the organization. We've got to bolster them up. And these fellows who tried to sell us out—we have them safe now and we'll keep them so until we're safely in, but then—they'll wish they hadn't!" Bob's face, as he uttered this threat, was not good to look upon.

"I'm planning several things," he continued quietly, "that will stir up a big howl. It won't hurt me. I'm used to it. I have no personal hold on the people anyway; they yell for me now because they think what I'm doing is to their advantage—and because I'm on top. But with you it is different. You're strong with them, all over the state, stronger than you know. You can't afford to reduce that strength for a mere mayoralty. You go on building it up, and your time will come for something better. You've been square with me," he added awkwardly, "when you might have bettered yourself by going over. And I won't forget it."

At this, the nearest approach to affectionate demonstration Bob had ever made, the cloud vanished from Remington's face. Impulsively he held out his hand.

"Forgive me, old man," he said with fine humility. "You make me heartily ashamed of myself. You are the prince of friends, and I'm a damned ingrate. But I ask one favor."

"All right. What is it?"

"I must present your name to the convention. It shall be the speech of my career. Gad! what a chance! You say you have no personal hold on the people." He began to pace the floor, his eyes shining brightly. "I will compel them to love you. They shall learn to know you in your true, heroic proportions. Not a man in that convention will dare vote against you."

"In the meantime I'll keep an eye on the delegates. Come down to earth."

Long after Paul had gone, until the clock had struck the hour of four, Bob worked and read, closely. At last he threw aside his book and went to the window. A thick coat of frost had covered it. He threw it open and looked out. The gale had subsided. Through broken clouds filtered the white radiance of the setting moon, silvering snow-encrusted lawn and trees. The silent beauty of the night seemed to him uncanny; it touched no responsive chord in his restless heart. He looked out over the sleeping city—his by right of conquest. He shook his head impatiently.

"It hasn't been worth while," he muttered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SILVER TONGUE

MRS. Eleanor Gilbert, very handsome in her morning gown, was pouring a second cup of coffee for her brother.

"A pretty woman at the breakfast table," remarked Henry Sanger, Jr., "is the most charming picture in the world."

Mrs. Gilbert shrugged her shoulders listlessly. "Save your compliments for your wife. I'm in no humor for them."

He laughed. "I know," he said sympathizingly, "it's that beastly salad we had last night. Why do people feed their guests such indigestibles? I gave over eating them years ago. What is your particular complaint against the scheme of existence this morning?"

"It is worse than lobster salad and champagne. It is boredom—deadly monotony. I'm dying of stagnation. Henry, you must—you simply *must*—come to my rescue to-day."

His brow puckered regretfully. "I'm sorry, Eleanor. I'd like to help you out, but really I can't. My morning is filled with important board meetings. And this afternoon I have planned to go to the bull-baiting."

"Bull-baiting? I thought that sport—"

"Figure of speech. I mean the convention at which the local G. O. P. is to choose the next mayor—perhaps—of our great city."

"O, politics. And who is to play bull?"

"Our political lord and master, Robert McAdoo, *alias* Knockout Bob, *alias* the Boss of the Steel City."

"Henry, what *is* a boss?"

Sanger removed his cigar from his mouth and surveyed his sister with mock reproach.

"Eleanor," he said sternly, "you betray a distressing ignorance of our national institutions. The boss is our American form of government, because lawmakers, executives and judges are his property—by right of purchase."

"In America that is the one divine right, I believe?"

"My dear, don't be flippant. The dollar is our most sacred institution."

"I can readily believe it. That may account for the deadly dullness of our society. I should like to meet one man or woman who thinks of something else. But this McAdoo—is he a good boss?"

"Where is your Americanism? There's no such thing as a good boss—unless he happens to be on your side. Then he becomes a leader."

"I am to suppose then," Mrs. Gilbert laughed, "that Boss McAdoo isn't on your side?"

"You are!" Sanger answered shortly. "I consider him the most dangerous politician in the state."

"Dangerous? *Because* he is not on your side?" She laughed again.

Henry Sanger believed himself sincere, as he answered, "No! Because of the manner of man he is. He is the most absolutely self-centered, self-willed man I know. He will listen to no one else. He would sacrifice any man or interest to forward his own ambition. He is essentially a bully. He was the prize bar-room bully of his neighborhood, in his younger days. He thrashed an ex-prize-fighter, I believe, and that gave him his start in politics. He bullied his ward into voting for his men. Then he bullied his way into control of several wards, then of the city. As a boss whose power is continually growing, I consider him a menace to this state. Bosses we must have. It is only through the boss that capital holds the balance of power against the hare-brained radicals infesting the country. But the boss must be a man who will listen to reason and consider others than himself." He spoke strongly.

"That is, you demand bosses whom you capitalists can boss?"

"And who has a better right to control than the men whose brains and industry and money have developed our wealth?" Sanger demanded hotly.

"But if the people can elect whom they please, I can't see why—"

"O, the people!" Sanger broke in disdainfully. "They can no more be trusted with the industrial and financial interests than can a man like McAdoo. That's why bosses are necessary. But I don't underestimate him. In the main, I say, his methods and character are those of the bar-room bully, but he has brains. And he knows how to use men and he has learned the trick of fooling the people. That's what makes him so dangerous."

"I think," Mrs. Gilbert said, "I think I should like to go to the convention with you. Would it be proper?"

"Well," Sanger said thoughtfully, "it won't be a very nice crowd, but—"

"O, I don't mind that. It will be a new experience. And anything out of the ordinary is a godsend to me. We'll consider it settled."

If Eleanor Gilbert felt the many curious glances turned upon her, as she entered the box her brother had managed to reserve for her, she gave no outward sign, but proceeded to study the excited crowd with amused eyes. The galleries were filled to overflowing with eager men, drawn thither by an unreasoning anticipation of some dramatic dénouement—they knew not what. At the reporters' table were representatives from every paper of the city, an unwonted attention from the press to an occasion supposedly cut-and-dried. To Eleanor, bred among a narrow set who spend their lives trying to forget their immediate progenitors and to cultivate a sense of class superiority, this oneness with the big crowd, so different from the decorous, well-groomed throngs she knew in the theaters, was a new experience. Her sensitive nerves caught the contagion of excitement with which the atmosphere was charged. Sanger saw a tinge of color come to her usually pale cheeks and her eyes brightened perceptibly. She caught him smiling at her.

"I'm glad I came," she said brightly. "I'm excited already, just as though I were a part of it all. I feel just as I did when I was a little girl and my governess took me to the play."

He laughed. "You are to see us at our favorite sport. Base-ball and politics are our national games."

She turned her eyes again to the galleries. "What a big, curious animal it is, this crowd! What a sense of power one feels in it!"

"Humph!" Sanger grunted. "Look over there, in the box opposite. You will find a more interesting study."

A group of men was just entering the box. Eleanor immediately fixed her attention upon one, the last to enter, whose identity she guessed at once. As was the case with most people, her first impression was of his physical strength.

"It's the boss! What tremendous shoulders."

Bob sat down in the rear of the box, but, even seated, he towered above his companions by half a head, and Eleanor could note the strongly marked face. Even across the theater she could catch the cold, piercing glance with which he swept the delegates. The glance traveled toward the box in which she sat, met hers, and, while one might count ten, against her will his eyes held hers, and then passed on to the stage.

Eleanor leaned back and drew a long breath. "So that's your bar-room bully? I should hate to be in that man's power. He is—relentless."

Sanger nodded. "I told you he is dangerous."

The convention was called to order. A permanent chairman was chosen, who, after a brief speech, declared the meeting open for mayoralty nominations. At once a man sprang to his feet and, in a speech bristling with high-flown metaphors, nominated "that clean man, that sterling friend of the people, James Rusling." His speech was greeted with perfunctory applause.

As the applause died down, another man secured recognition.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the convention," he began, "it was to have been my privilege to place before this convention the name of William Hemenway, whose devotion to the Republican party and to the interests of the people needs no praise from me. It is therefore with the keenest regret I have received from him a letter, which I now hold, in which he gives me the distressing news that he has been stricken with ill health, such as to incapacitate him for the arduous duties of a campaign and of the office of mayor. He therefore authorizes me to withdraw his candidacy and requests those delegates instructed for him to cast their votes for the gentleman who has been so eloquently nominated, James Rusling."

For a moment the great crowd sat in the silence of blank bewilderment. Then, as the import of the announcement dawned upon them, an angry murmur arose from the galleries. Down in the body of the house a delegate, a big, burly ruffian, sprang to his feet.

"Sick—hell!" he shouted. "We know the kind of sickness Bill Hemenway has."

It was a signal for uproar. In an instant men, in the galleries and on the floor, were on their feet. The protesting murmur grew into a roar, a storm of anger and derision. Eleanor, for a moment frightened by the furious clamor, turned pale.

"What is it?" she asked her brother excitedly. "What do they mean?"

"Hemenway was McAdoo's candidate. He has been persuaded to withdraw in favor of Rusling, the other candidate."

"O, what a low trick!"

"Nonsense!" Sanger said sharply. "Everything is fair in politics, especially when you're fighting a man like McAdoo."

She did not argue the point, but turned to look once more at the boss. To all appearances he was the one cool man in the theater. He was sitting, arms folded across his chest, his face expressionless as a mask, looking out on the furious crowd with the same cold, piercing glance that gave no clue to his thoughts or emotions.

The uproar died down, and tense silence succeeded once more. What the crowd had anticipated had happened. They recognized MacPherson's crafty hand. Was the boss checkmated by his sworn enemy? In the hearts of the McAdoo followers consternation reigned.

Out of the tense silence a voice rang out,

"Mr. Chairman!"

"Mr. Remington!"

The big man who had broken the silence before now sprang to his feet again. "Remington!" he shouted enthusiastically. "Remington! Give 'em hell, Paul, give 'em hell!" The crowd took up the shout. "Remington! Remington!" While the applause lasted, Eleanor saw a young man walk rapidly toward the stage from his seat in the rear of the parquet.

"Who is he?" she demanded of her brother.

"McAdoo's mouthpiece," he answered shortly, shifting uneasily in his seat.

As he stood on the platform, waiting for the applause to subside, Paul Remington thrilled with the knowledge that his moment had come—a moment such as comes but once in a lifetime, and to but few men. All the night before and all that day to the hour of the convention, he had paced his rooms planning his speech; whipping himself into an emotional delirium. As one in a trance, he had walked to the theater and witnessed the preliminary proceedings. And he had found the properties right, the atmosphere electric with excitement, the crowd eager, tense, ready to be played upon by a master hand. The dramatic quality of the moment was the last spur needed. His theatric soul rushed to his need. Every fiber of his being was aquiver with passion—a passion for the moment real, dominating, overwhelming.

And before him sat the woman of his dreams.

He raised his hand and the applause ceased. There was an instant's hush.

"I am not here to upbraid. . . . "

The tragedy that had come into her young life had left Eleanor Gilbert but one relic of her girlhood, a passionate love of music. As the first words fell from Paul's lips, she felt a thrill. For a time, giving no heed to the sense of his words, she listened with the musician's trained ear to the wonderful voice, deep yet resonant and flexible, under perfect control, carrying a faintly minor quality. Gradually the spell of the orator took hold upon her. The voice ceased to be the musical instrument, became the medium for the transmission of his passion. Every paragraph, every sentence was a chariot of fire, carrying some burning truth straight to the heart of the hearer.

"We are citizens of no mean city. We are the industrial leader of an age distinctively industrial. . . . But I do not boast of our achievements, rather of those that achieved. The work and greatness of this city are the work and greatness of the hundreds and thousands of men and women who here live and strive. To the organizer, the capitalist who has reaped the first fruits of our sowing, I do not begrudge one jot of the praise due him. But the one factor in our progress without which it could not have been possible has been the brawn and brain and industry of the people.

"And so in the nation.

"When the American Republic was founded, the triumph of democracy was believed complete. But eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. And we—almost to our undoing—have slept." In simple yet vivid words Paul went on to describe the commercial, industrial and political evils that have taken root among us.

"Yet these evils," he declared, "pernicious as their immediate effects, might be endured, were it not that they threaten the existence of our vital institution, popular government. Time was, perhaps, when our industrial kings were content to build within the pale of the law. But industrial conditions and methods changed. The law lost its reverend quality. Wealth entered the realm of politics. Vast political machines controlled by vaster financial rings, seized our great political parties. Obsolete laws, passed to meet the puny industrial conditions of a generation gone, were forcibly retained. Where it became necessary, as a sop to a restless people, to pass new and broader laws, executives and courts were seated who would sustain infractions of those laws. The machinery of the law—government—has become the creature of corporate wealth."

At this point in his speech Paul cast aside restraint and poured forth a torrent of invective against corporate greed and its servants. At the conclusion of his climax not a sound could be heard in the theater. His audience sat wrapped in an ominous silence.

"What do these things mean?" Paul continued. "Of late a new word has come into use among us, plutocracy! Government by wealth, for wealth—by the very nature of the lust that gives it birth, ever conscienceless, pitiless, ever unutterably selfish, an enemy to the equal brotherhood of men! . . . Plutocracy among us has no reason for existence. It denies civilization. It is a reversion to the barbarous reasoning of a thousand years ago. It gives the lie to history. I return to my former proposition—what we are to-day, that we have grown steadily in power and influence, that we have added miraculously to our material wealth, that we have met political and industrial crises successfully, is due, not to the genius and courage of a few, but to the character of the whole people.

"The great, sane, common people of this land can be trusted with our future. Therefore we must not relinquish control of that future. The government of this people, ours by decree of Almighty God, must remain in the hands of the people!"

The men of that audience, drawn from many sources, possessed a common heritage. It was a far cry to the Bourne, to the Scottish hills, to Marston Moor, to the bloody streets of Berlin. But in their veins coursed the blood of those who had made those fields memorable. And to them Paul's burning words were as a summons to battle—a battle against odds, against oppression. They met his cry with the only answer given him during his speech—the battle cry.

"Fools! Claptrap!" Eleanor heard her brother mutter. She looked at him. He was pale and nervous.

"Hush!"

She looked across the theater toward Bob. He, too, was pale. His hands, still folded across his chest, held the biceps in a fierce grip. His forehead was creased in a deep frown. What did that frown mean? she wondered, almost subconsciously.

When Paul resumed speaking, he gave his speech a more specific application. In plain, unmincing terms he outlined the political history of the state. In it the forces of plutocracy were most strongly entrenched. For a generation, until the time when John Dunmeade had dared to set his face against the powers of corruption, it had lain prostrate, unprotesting, under the heel of a great railway monopoly. This monopoly, abetted by the steel interests of the city, had robbed the greatest state of the union of its virtue and independence. One man, by grace of his control of the railway system, had dictated the choice of officers and their official policy. Thus, the political power of six millions of people concentrated in the hands of one man, formed the chief of plutocracy's strongholds. If the people of the republic were to do battle for their liberties, in that state the battle would be lost or won.

As this state was the heart of the plutocratic system, so was their city the heart of the state's corruption. The great city was a mine to be shared with no interloper. And here the monopoly had reigned supreme, by right of the might of its wealth. Bosses might come and bosses might go, but one and all they owed allegiance to the one master four hundred miles away, whose wrath was more to be feared by the politically ambitious than the anger of God. In return for their allegiance, the bosses had been permitted to pillage the city at will—while the people had slept on.

"Tell me, you men," Paul cried passionately, "what do you think of yourselves? What a picture! The industrial center! Your city the mighty! The harlot among the cities, walking the streets and crying the rags of her virtue to the highest bidder! Did some man, more brave than his fellows, protest? The city bosses, secure in the might of their despotic lord and in your criminal lethargy, brazenly flaunting the dollar brand on their foreheads, answered with the corruptionist's challenge, what are you going to do about it? And we—we, corrupt but content—did nothing.

"But not all of us. There was a man in our midst, bred in their school, who saw their power and determined to break it. . . ."

Simply, without exaggeration, Paul sketched the local political history, beginning with Bob's open break with MacPherson and leading up to his victory in the recent primaries, when Hemenway had been nominated.

" . . . So this man of steel, standing alone against the corporate wealth of a whole state, has put your enemy to rout. To William Hemenway he gave the opportunity to do a great work in the cause of the people. That opportunity William Hemenway declines—for obvious reasons! 'What are you going to do about it?' Whom will you choose in his stead?

"My friends," Paul cried with a sweeping gesture that included the galleries in his question, "I ask you, who of all our city is the one man fitted to stand at your head and lead your fight?"

He paused an instant, as a murmur of unbelieving wonderment passed over the audience. Eleanor, following the eyes of a thousand others, looked toward the opposite box. But Bob was gone.

In a voice sunk almost to a whisper and tremulous with suppressed feeling, Paul spoke again.

"In your faces I read the answer. There can be but one answer. You may think that I perhaps exaggerate his strength because he is my friend. He *is* my friend, and therefore I, who have sounded the depths of his heart, know the man's mighty mold. To be a friend—what is it? The finest thing given to man. When the Christ came to earth, He chose to be called The Friend. Friendship is the mirror of the soul; in it appear the strength and weakness of a man. This man has been to me the perfect friend—God do so to me, if I forget! He who is capable of such a friendship can be trusted with the people's cause.

"Mr. Chairman," he concluded, "I have the honor to nominate *my friend,* Robert McAdoo."

He walked off the stage into the wings, amid a perfect silence. For a full minute the audience, under his spell, sat mute and motionless; there was no thought of applause. Finally the chairman started, as from a dream, and arose. With an audible sigh the audience stirred to life. Paul, listening from the wings and fearing to hear applause, breathed deeply in relief. His moment had indeed come.

"And gone!" he muttered complainingly. He turned away—to meet a stern-faced man, who looked at him fixedly.

"You did well, Paul," said the stern-faced man. "You've cut out a big job for me."

That was all. But Paul had received a finer tribute even than the silence of the audience. Bob's voice was husky.

Henry Sanger vigorously wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"God!" he muttered.

"Will you please go and bring him here?" Eleanor asked him. "I must know that man."

CHAPTER IX

THE LADY OF DREAMS

THE convention had been adjourned. Robert McAdoo was the Republican nominee for mayor. And Paul Remington had met the lady of his dreams. Sanger had brought him to her and performed the introduction. Afterward he had left, pleading a business engagement.

Eleanor for a few minutes watched the crowd, as it slowly passed out from the theater. Then she turned to Paul.

"I shall not congratulate you," she said gravely. "I paid you a better compliment, while you were speaking. Are you ready to say, Now let me die?"

"No," he answered with equal gravity, "I am ready to say, Now let me live. I have met you at last."

She raised her hand protestingly. "Please don't spoil my impression of you. You were wonderful. I have heard of orators swaying audiences to their will, but I never before realized what it means. My brother tells me you saved Mr. McAdoo from defeat."

Paul took a keen pleasure in his honesty, as he resisted temptation and answered lightly, "O, no. The result would have been the same without my speech. It was such an absurdly impossible trick, that of bribing Hemenway off and buying up his delegates. Its success depended upon their catching Bob napping. They didn't know the old fellow. All I did was to furnish a reason for an action already determined upon."

"Ah!" she said regretfully. "Then it was all planned beforehand?"

"Every step!"

"Even to your speech?"

He nodded smilingly. "You know, Mrs. Gilbert, there never was a speech worth giving that wasn't prepared beforehand. Every word of that speech was written out and memorized verbatim. For thirty-six hours I have neither eaten nor slept, done nothing but study it and work up to the nervous tension necessary to its successful delivery."

"Then all those burning words were a sham, all that display of splendid passion a theatrical trick to save a man not worthy—"

"No, no!" he broke in eagerly. "All I said was true—true as life and death. And Bob—you don't know him—he is magnificent, worthy of—"

"Spare me," she impatiently interrupted. "I heard that once before—in your speech. I am frankly disappointed. You carried me out of myself. I forgot reason, prejudice, everything. I believed you a genuine master-spirit, *compelling* us to see the truth. Now—I see you are only a clever actor, tricking us into ignoring the truth." She drew a deep breath. "But it is good to get one's feet on solid ground once more. After all, these rarified atmospheres don't sustain life.

"But," she added, "you did it well. I congratulate you—now."

Paul merely laughed. She rose to leave.

"Please don't go yet," he begged. "I have something to say to you." She noted that the theater was not yet empty and sat down once more. There was a pause, while Paul abstractedly studied the carpet at his feet.

"Well?"

He looked up, laughing. "Do you know, for the first time in my life, I think, I am at loss what to say, or rather how to say it. Do you believe in preëxistences?"

"Decidedly not. I'm fairly healthy. And, besides, the present existence demands all my attention. Was it to ask—"

"No, that was only by way of introduction. What would you say, if I were to tell you that, although I have just met you and have seen you but twice before so far as I can remember, I seem to have known you always?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "That you are the victim of an overheated imagination."

"Of course," he answered calmly. "What we don't learn in our own experience we always accept with a grain of doubt. I myself have difficulty in believing that the world is round. You are like the rest of us, Mrs. Gilbert."

"O, yes," she said indifferently, "I'm very human, just ordinary flesh and blood. You are about to tell me, of course, that you—"

"Please save your irony until I have finished," he said gravely. "I am, and it is true. Probably at some forgotten time and place I have seen you.—But anyhow, for years—I can't say exactly when it began—I have been haunted by a dream of a woman. She has been my ideal. It will strike you as sentimental rot, of course, yet I have lain whole nights sleepless, staring at a vision of her that could not have been more distinct, if flesh and blood. At first I resisted, calling myself a romantic ass. But resistance was useless. And in time the feeling I had for her became an absolute knowledge that some day I should know her.

"One day, five years ago, I saw her for an instant—just as I had dreamed her. Then again a few days ago I saw her. And when I stood on the stage to-day and saw you in the audience, I wasn't surprised. It seemed natural that at the moment when I was about to do a rather good thing you should be present. I don't say that I was talking to you alone, or that you were my inspiration, or anything like that. But I can say that at no time was I free from the consciousness of your presence and a sort of subconscious rejoicing—not a tickled vanity, if you please—that you in a way could share my moment. That is all. Now you may scoff, Mrs. Gilbert."

She shrugged her shoulders again, a fashion she had. "I'm sorry—you will forgive me, Mr. Remington?—I'm not deeply impressed—and a bit incredulous."

"I didn't expect you to be impressed," he answered quietly, "and I'm not proposing—yet. But, Mrs. Gilbert," his head went up, eyes flashing, "I'm not a sentimental fool, although I have told you this at first meeting. And I am to be taken seriously."

"Why don't you go on the stage?" she fleered.

Paul looked at her uncertainly for a moment, then his gravity was cast aside as a cloak. He made some inconsequent answer and promptly led the talk into other and lighter channels, whither she followed him carelessly.

So they went on for the better part of an hour, bandying nonsense. Paul, luxuriating in her presence, cared little for the meaning of their words, so he might watch the play of her beautiful features and hear her voice. A dozen times she determined to leave, and as often made the lingering groups an excuse for remaining herself. She was not quite free from the spell he had woven about her during his speech. Something in the man broke down her habit of cold indifference to men, and put her on her mettle; she strove to meet his occasional witty sallies in kind, sometimes with a success that delighted them both. Once, when their badinage assumed a more personal tone, she protested.

"We're talking as though we were old friends," she said.

"Of course," he responded calmly. "We are. That was written long ago."

"Your confidence is a poor compliment to me!"

"It isn't a question of compliments, but of fate! And of invincible determination! Do you suppose that, having now found the lady of my dreams, I shall rest until we are friends—perfect friends?"

"You don't doubt your ability to win my friendship?"

"Absolutely, no!" he responded, in gay assurance.

"You have many friends?" she queried curiously.

"I have been lucky in the matter of friends."

"And do you give them all the same romantic appreciation and return you professed for Mr. McAdoo? Or was that part of the play-acting, too? It was your most effective bit, by the way."

"Ah!" he cried. "You persist in doubting my sincerity. That, at least, was not play-acting. I hadn't even prepared it. It was in my heart, and forced itself into words, that was all. No, I don't give to every one the same return I give him, because there are few such friends."

"I can't see what you find in common with one who, my brother tells me, is typical of the very worst in our politics."

"I forgot you are of the enemy," he laughed, and added more soberly, "Your brother is wrong. There may have been regrettable things in Bob's earlier career. But in the six years I have known him, I have seen little of the dirty politician. His victories have been won chiefly by his courage and resourcefulness and the fact that men, whether they like him or not, instinctively trust him and follow him. If he has resorted to questionable tactics, it has been only to meet similar methods of the opposition. And his victories have been very much to the advantage of this city."

"And to the advantage of his loyal friend, I suppose," she suggested inquiringly. "You are, no doubt —I'm very ignorant of politics—some one very important, a high officer, congressman, at least?"

"O, no. I'm only a senator of the common or garden variety, a very unimportant member of our state legislature."

"While he has become boss," she added. "It seems—"

"Don't, Mrs. Gilbert, I beg of you," he interrupted gravely. "It would be disloyal for me to listen to such suggestions even from you. You don't understand what a friendship ours is. I think few men have felt such a deep affection as Bob and I have for each other. For all that men follow him, he has few real friends, practically none at all but me. And he gives me all his heart. The least I can do is to trust him. I *could* fill a higher position, and I often chafe over my slow climb. If I were to insist, he would help me to the best in his power to give. But his judgment and his heart are to be trusted. You shall know him and then you will understand why I trust him so absolutely. You see," he added smilingly, "I'm very enthusiastic."

"Thank you, no!" she said indifferently. "I approve of your loyalty, of course. But I saw your friend this afternoon and, frankly, I don't think I should like him. I don't care to meet—"

She stopped suddenly, and both looked up startled, feeling another's presence. It was Bob who had come into the box, unnoticed by them. To both Paul and Eleanor, it was as though a cloud had passed across the face of the sun.

There was an awkward pause while Bob, standing motionless in the rear of the box, looked steadily at Eleanor with coldly hostile eyes. And Eleanor, startled but not disconcerted, returned his with a glance into which she strove to put amusement.

Paul sought to take into his hands what threatened to be a situation.

"It's fate, Mrs. Gilbert," he said with a laugh which he tried to render easy. "Let me present our next mayor. Mrs. Gilbert, Bob, has just avowed her alliance with the enemy. We must convert her."

"Why?" Bob answered crudely, without changing his regard.

And somehow, as he said it, Bob's monosyllable carried a sting far sharper than its crude surface irony. It put her strangely on the defensive; and theretofore, with men, Mrs. Eleanor Gilbert had always been mistress of the situation. She tried to answer with indifference.

"You have so many enemies that one more or less can not disturb you?"

"I have many."

"And the habit of beating them, I believe?"

"I believe so," he answered steadily.

"But Bob doesn't make war on women," Paul interrupted with nervous eagerness.

"Too small game, I suppose," she said with the mocking upward inflection that had so often put men to flight.

"It has never been necessary," Bob responded, unmoved by her sarcasm.

And Eleanor, beaten, gave up the battle of eyes. Yet there was defiance in her laugh, as she said,

"Mr. McAdoo would be as merciless to a woman as to any other enemy, I fancy. But I must go."

This time Paul did not protest.

The two men followed her silently out of the theater to the street. As she was about to step into the automobile, she gathered her courage for a last effort.

"It has been a very interesting afternoon. I thank you—both." She gave Bob a fleeting, mocking look and turned to Paul. "Come and see me, Mr. Remington. We will discuss politics. Good afternoon, Mr. McAdoo." And she was rapidly whirled away.

Paul drew a deep breath. "I don't see why you and she don't hit it off better. She's wonderful."

"She's the devil!" Bob growled.

Paul did not answer this outburst.

"Let's have a drink," he suggested. "I'm limp as a rag. You've got to break over this time, old man."

They entered a near-by saloon. When they had poured their whisky, Paul raised his glass.

"To the next mayor!"

"Luck!" Bob said briefly. "And wisdom!" he added.

"We'll not quarrel over that, Bob," Paul said gravely. And they drank.

Safe in the seclusion of the hooded automobile, Eleanor Gilbert was repeating, half in amusement, half in resentment,

"What a man! My dear, you caught it that time. And you deserved it! What a man!"

She did not refer to Paul.

CHAPTER X

DISCONTENT

IN the tallest of the city's skyscrapers, in the highest story of said building, were, as the letters on the ground-glass door announced, the law offices of Paul Remington. The term "law offices" was perhaps a misnomer. For upon Paul had fallen the distrust which the business public often feels for the political lawyer, and the bulk of his practice consisted principally in caring for the legal end of Bob's business ventures and in helping their political friends out of police-court scrapes.

Yet these offices were not a place of idleness. For at one end was a ten-by-twelve apartment, furnished with a roll-top desk, one revolving-chair and two cane-bottom affairs called chairs by courtesy and apt to limit the visitor's call to a purely business length. This, denominated by Paul "the engine-room," was Bob's office where, hand on throttle, he directed his political machine.

The rest of the suite, equipped by Bob's money and Paul's taste, was so arranged as to resemble an office as little as possible. Massive black oak chairs awaited the visitor. Thick velvet carpets caressed his feet. Some excellent etchings and rows of calf-bound books completed the atmosphere of a library. Only the presence of Miss Myrtle Jones, stenographer, reminded you that this was a legal center. Miss Jones was not the least decorative feature of the office—which was why Paul engaged her. Moreover, Miss Jones was distinctly aware of this fact. Toward the appreciative Paul she was the eager helper. Toward Bob, of whom she stood greatly in fear and whose acrid humor she could not understand, she preserved a primly professional attitude.

On the particular morning some two weeks after the convention, Miss Jones was early at her post. And very pretty, too. There really was no reason for such early industry. But Miss Jones wisely reasoned that the sooner your work was finished the more time you would have for—for more work perhaps? She raised her head with a start, as the door opened—and dropped it in disappointment as Bob entered with a curt greeting.

Later Bob summoned her to his office.

"Will you take a letter, Miss Jones?"

As, head bent over her note-book, she took down his words, Bob smiled sardonically at her elaborate coif and careful toilet. When things went wrong, as they occasionally did even with him, his ill humor took the form of an ugly, stinging pleasantry. The night previous he had lost a trick in the campaign, through treachery. And he was troubled, although he would not admit it to himself, over another matter.

"You may conclude with the customary lie of 'yours truly.' That's all, Miss Jones."

She started to leave, and then paused, summoning her courage to ask the question that had been trembling on her lips for three days.

"Mr. McAdoo—"

"Yes, Miss Jones?"

"Is—Mr. Remington sick or away? He hasn't been to the office for three days."

Bob waited long enough to repeat his sardonic grin, before answering. "No, Miss Jones, Mr. Remington is not out of town. He is, however, sick—love-sick—in love with a very wonderful lady. Consequently he has no time either for his own business or for my campaign—or to flirt with his pretty stenographer. Is there any other information you desire, Miss Jones?"

Later, looking through the open door in the anteroom, Bob saw her furtively dabbing a handkerchief to her eyes. Whereupon he left his desk and strode to her side. She tried to look defiantly up at him; the attempt was a miserable failure. She promptly burst into tears.

"O, you're cruel!" she sobbed. "I hate you." Which was rather impertinent, addressed to her employer, but quite justified under the circumstances.

Bob laughed. "That, Miss Jones, is not a distinction. I just came in to give you some advice. Of course, you won't take it. It is this—don't be a sentimental fool. Don't dream impossible dreams. You're healthy. Go and marry some plain, healthy, common-sense fellow—that young chap across the hall who brings you candy, for instance. Then you'll be happy."

"I don't want to marry any one. I don't want to be happy," she stormed.

Bob growled, "No, of course, you don't want to be happy. That was only a slip of the tongue. No really sensible person ever wants to be happy. That's why I advise you to get married."

Bob went back to his office and sat scowling savagely at the papers on his desk.

"Damn that woman!" he muttered angrily. He did not refer to Miss Jones.

He was still scowling when Haggin appeared half an hour later. Haggin wore a sheepish grin.

"Well," he said, "they sure did put the bug on us last night."

"So I've been told," Bob remarked dryly. "Sit down."

Haggin sat down on the window-sill—it was more comfortable than Bob's chairs—and crossed his hands over his capacious paunch.

"That's what comes," he vouchsafed sagely, "of tyin' to Democrats. A Democrat's a born fool, never knows which side of his bread's buttered. No wonder he believes in free trade an' sixteen-to-one an' such foolishness. An' a Democrat ain't got any principle. A Republican'll gener'ly stick—if you make it worth his while. But a Democrat—aw, hell!" Haggin's tone expressed the very quintessence of disgust.

"Humph!" Bob growled. "You've begun to take political speeches seriously. That's a bad sign. The trouble is, Tom, even a Democrat is human. We're all alike, with an eye for the main chance."

"Sure," Haggin assented readily. "Why not? But a Democrat looks fer the main chance, as you say it, out of his blind eye. But say, Malassey's out there."

"Yes." And Bob's teeth came together with an audible click. "He's been waiting there some time. That's why I sent for you. Tom, how much is he worth in the Seventh?"

"Well, he's worth a good deal. All that Democrat bunch follow him like sheep. An' the Seventh is a Democrat ward."

"Then you think he's really important?"

"Unhuh!" Haggin agreed. "Biggest man in the ward. Paul's the only man that ever could touch him. An' even Paul can't knock sense into a Democrat when he gets set. But say! You ain't—"

"I'm going to knock a little sense into one Democrat." He touched a button and Miss Jones, all traces of her recent storm erased, opened the door.

"Miss Jones, will you ask Malassey to step in. And, Miss Jones, if Mr. Remington should come in, please hold him until I can see him. I rely on you." He grinned maliciously. Miss Jones tossed her head and closed the door with a bang behind Malassey.

Malassey was a type of the professional "mixer," a big, red-faced fellow with a bluff, boisterous manner that passed for good fellowship among the undiscerning. One eye was set slightly lower than its fellow. Bob greeted him with a curt nod and lolled back in his chair. Haggin grimly ignored the entrance of the new-comer. Malassey seated himself awkwardly on the edge of a chair.

"I'm mighty sorry about the convention, Mr. McAdoo," he began eagerly. "I—"

"Yes, of course," Bob interrupted with what was geniality itself in him. "I was quite sure you would feel sorry." Haggin was suddenly seized with a fit of coughing. "And how are the wife and babies?"

"O, they're well enough, I guess," Malassey answered, looking suspiciously at Haggin. "But I guess you ain't much interested in them."

"O, yes, I am," Bob returned with excessive politeness. "You remember it was because of your difficulty in feeding and clothing them that we had you promoted to a captaincy. Naturally, I'm glad to know the appointment has turned out all right. There are three of the youngsters, I believe?"

"No, four now," Malassey said, shifting uneasily in his chair.

"Ah!" Bob purred. "That's too bad."

Malassey sighed lugubriously. "Yes, one more mouth to feed."

"Well, that wasn't exactly my idea. I meant it's too bad another brat should have come into the world with the blood of a skunk in its veins."

Malassey's red face blanched. "Skunk! Mr. McAdoo! After all I've done—" he began reproachfully.

"Spare us," Bob interrupted, still preserving his suave manner. "I'm well acquainted with the extent and nature of your services. By the way, Malassey, I notice you've lifted that mortgage on your house."

"Yes, I have," Malassey answered sulkily.

Bob turned to Haggin. "There's financiering for you! Six months on a salary of eighteen hundred a year, feeds a wife and three—no, four—babies, and out of the balance pays off a mortgage of one thousand dollars—with interest. Surely, Malassey, you haven't been grafting?"

Malassey's ill-mated eyes darted a venomous glance at the imperturbable Bob. "No, you wouldn't give me a good district."

"Ah! Speculating then. Why didn't you let Tom and me in on the deal? That wasn't like you, Malassey, to hog your tip. What was the stock?"

Malassey shuffled uncomfortably. "No, I didn't bet on no stock."

"Then how—"

"I went into a pool-room and laid a bet on a horse at the New Orleans races."

"I see. What horse—if I am not too inquisitive?" Bob inquired ingratiatingly.

Malassey hesitated, then said boldly, "Silas T."

"Aw, hell!" Haggin snorted.

"You seem disturbed, Tom," Bob suggested.

"Left at the post!" Haggin said shortly.

Bob chuckled. "I see. I really think he'd better hunt another job, Tom."

Malassey sprang to his feet, pale and trembling. "Before God! Mr. McAdoo," he began with nervous vehemence. "I didn't—"

Bob came sharply upright in his chair. The lion had played long enough with its victim.

"Before God! Malassey," he said harshly, "you *did*. You were to go into the Democratic nominating committee and help get me their indorsement. But you didn't."

"It's a lie, whoever says it," Malassey cried. "I voted for you, and the record'll prove it."

"Yes, you voted for me, when the committee was safely against me. You took a flier in double-dealing, Malassey. It has netted you a thousand dollars and that's all. The mayor expects your resignation at once. Good morning, Malassey."

And Malassey, guilty and knowing the futility of denial, went out. Haggin shook his head doubtfully. "Better throw a scare into him an' let him off 'til after election. He'll work like the devil agin you now."

"No," Bob said contemptuously. "He would work against us anyhow. He would hate me because I found him out and would knife me under cover. That kind always does. Better have him openly against us. Then we know just what he's doing.

"Haggin," he added abruptly, fixing a keen glance on the saloon-keeper, "Haggin, what's your price?"

"My price?"

"Yes. We all seem to have our price. What's yours? What will you sell me out for?"

"Aw, g'wan!" Haggin answered awkwardly. "You're talkin' through your hat. Guess you ain't afraid of my sellin' you out."

"Why not?"

Haggin stroked his paunch vigorously in his embarrassment. "Well, I like your style. An' you've been square with me. I guess I'll stick by you, all right, all right."

"Even if I were to turn honest and cut out the graft?"

"Sure. Why not?" Haggin grinned. "I've got enough. Guess I'll be goin' before you git any more fool notions into your head." And he went out, leaving Bob to study what seemed to him a peculiar phenomenon.

"Will some one please explain this mystery of human nature?" he addressed himself impatiently. "There's Malassey—I took him when he was down and out, helped him get a home and bread and butter for his family, and kept him out of the penitentiary; and he sells me out for a thousand dollars. There's Haggin—I thrashed him, took away his prestige and power—his dearest possessions—and he obeys my slightest suggestion without a question and nothing could buy him off. It's beyond me. And there's Paul—"

He returned to his work without completing the thought.

An hour later Paul came in and threw himself wearily on one of Bob's uncomfortable chairs.

"Well," he said moodily, "you lost that trick."

"I'm not infallible," Bob returned calmly. "And they played this hand better than the last one."

Paul nodded. "Yes. But why, in Heaven's name! did they pick out Harland? He's a good man. And independent. They can't control him."

"Yes, he's all that. And he'll make a good run, which is more to the point. He's the only man in the city who stands a chance against us."

"But where do they come in between you two?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders. "Any port in a storm. They prefer to take their chances with him rather than with me."

Paul sprang to his feet and began to pace the floor nervously. "They'll use him to break you and then they'll break him. They are relentless—and patient. It's an invincible combination. Good God! Bob, what an enemy you are fighting! You're a big man, but you're a pygmy beside them. You've won out so far, but that is because they haven't really taken you seriously. But now you've taught them what you are, and they are determined to crush you."

He sat down again dejectedly. "Do you know, I've a terrible presentiment that we're going to lose this time."

"Don't be a fool," Bob answered sharply. "Of course, they're strong. Of course, they're relentless.

Did you suppose they would sit quietly by and see us walk off with their cake? Did you suppose they would be bowled over by a blast of your eloquence?"

"My eloquence? Bah! My weapons hurt nobody."

"Nonsense! At any rate, lack of confidence makes them no more effective."

Paul resumed his restless pacing. "No, it's not nonsense," he declared in a passion of despondency. "I admit I'm completely discouraged. Why shouldn't I be? What am I? A negligible quantity, a braying ass neither feared nor needed very much by any one. An insignificant state senator with the record of having lost more bills than any other man in the same length of time. And only that through your charity——"

"Charity! Don't be a fool, man."

"Yes, charity!" Paul repeated vehemently, his passion working upon him. "Six years ago I thought I could become something worth while through my own merits. No wonder you thought me a presumptuous rattlebrain! I'm not equipped to play the game with you. I'm a misfit. In your plans there is little use for my talents. So I'm overshadowed by you. And so long as we play the same game together, I can never be anything better than your second fiddle."

"Do you mean that you don't care to help me out in this fight?"

Paul strode to Bob's side and placed his hand affectionately on the latter's shoulder.

"Now it's you who are the fool," he said fervidly. "Of course not, old man! I'm with you in this scrimmage and in every other you ever go into. What I mean is, while we are working out your plans here in the state, can't I have the chance to work out mine, in a separate field where I can act for myself and in my own way? Bob, if you're elected—and, of course, you will be, in spite of my presentiment—why can't I take Gerwig's place on the ticket this fall and go to congress?"

Bob shook his head.

"Why not?" Paul demanded petulantly.

"In the first place I have promised Gerwig. In the second—"

"You can get Gerwig to step aside."

"I *can*," Bob said quietly. "But it's a rule of mine to keep my word in such cases. In the second place, it will mean six years wasted. Here, have a cigar. Now sit down and we'll discuss this thing rationally." Paul lighted his cigar and sat down, puffing nervously.

"Now you," Bob went on, "have been four years in our state legislature and know how it has always danced to Murchell's music."

"Yes, but—" Paul began eagerly.

"Save your 'buts.' Congress is Murchell's system brought to perfection. It is controlled by the most perfect political machine ever devised. A half-dozen men in New York and Chicago say what action shall or shall not be taken. And their say goes, always! The majority may shift in name from Republican to Democrat, but the financial ring, the trusts, *always have a majority.*"

"Then how a strong independent would shine in such surroundings!"

"Yes. That's what Gerwig thought. He's been in congress two terms, and who ever hears of him? He's chairman of the Committee on Ventilation of the House Chamber!"

"O, Gerwig!" Paul said contemptuously. "Gerwig's a fathead."

"Yes, Gerwig's all that. And if all independents were like Gerwig, the congressional machine wouldn't be a necessity. It's to squelch independents of force and brilliancy, like yourself, that it has been perfected. And it *is* perfectly effective. There isn't a genuinely independent member of either house who has any influence, who is ever heard of."

"O, come," Paul protested. "Isn't that drawing it rather strong? There are—" And he cited several congressmen whose names were often head-lined in the daily papers.

"Gigantic frauds," Bob growled. "Gigantic frauds, all of them. And the people are beginning to see through them. You go to congress—what happens? You'll find yourself shunted off to one side, a bushel basket clapped over your head, bound, muzzled. I can imagine no sadder fate for you than to be muzzled."

Paul laughed. "We can agree on that, anyhow. Go on."

"It's worse even than that. Even the machine congressman has no real power. He must take his orders just as our legislator must take orders from the state boss. There aren't a half-dozen men in both houses who hold even a shadow of power, and they have that only as agents for those back of them. If you're content with being a figurehead, with having only the appearance of influence, go ahead to congress and nonentity. But you must pay the price." He paused, smoking meditatively.

"Go on," Paul exclaimed impatiently. "The price—"

"The only thing in the world worth having. Real power."

"Real power? I?" Paul laughed almost bitterly. "What power have I? How do people think of me? What have I been? One of your many underlings, your puppet—"

"Stop!" Bob was so near to anger that Paul was startled. "That's enough of this old woman's chatter. You've been listening to bad counsel. You'd be a miserable weakling if you didn't possess influence, after the chances you have had. The trouble with you is that things have come so easily you don't realize their value. What power have you? You've been in the legislature four years and you're the only legislator in a generation who has made himself a force to be reckoned with. You have never won an important battle, but you have always been on the popular side. You're known in every town in the state, as well as I am, and as a brave, independent, honest man. The people believe in you and listen to you. You may not know it, but Murchell and Dunmeade couldn't have accomplished what they have in this state without a man like you to take just your part. And here in the city you've had a free hand, you've been continually before the public. In spite of your connection with me, the public here believes in your sincerity and loves you. Thousands will do for you out of personal friendship what they do for me only because it is to their advantage. If I lose my grip, they'll leave me instanter. But they'll stick to you, so long as they continue to believe in your sincerity and independence and honesty, no matter what happens. My puppet! I can't do without you now. Power, man! I'm not precisely a weakling. If you want to know what power you have, go over to the other side and beat me!"

The petulant discontent on Paul's face gave way to amazed, incredulous delight and pride. "You mean?" he gasped.

"I mean," Bob answered quietly, "that without the support you would draw from me, I probably couldn't win."

"That means," Paul exclaimed, "that you, Bob McAdoo, are in my hands, to make or to break."

"That's true."

Paul sprang to his feet with a passionate gesture. "But, after all, I have power only because you have given it to me. Therefore it is yours. We will use it together, Bob. You've been a finer friend than I realized. But I realize it now. And I shan't forget."

"All right," Bob said, shifting uncomfortably under this demonstration. "Then you give up this congress foolishness?"

"Of course! You're right, as usual. Six years ago I couldn't have given it up. Then the appearance of importance was enough. But that is ended. The superficial sensationalist is dead and buried, for ever—I hope. Now I want to be a real man, an original force. I've only realized it lately. That's why I was so discouraged a moment ago; I seemed to myself so futile. My perception of values has grown clearer. And it is thanks to you. When I said, that day in the convention, that you have been the perfect friend, I spoke a truer word than I knew."

Bob turned from him to look out of the window. "If I hadn't thought it was in you, I shouldn't have taken you up," he said gruffly. Then he wheeled sharply on

Paul. "But is what you say true? *Is* the sensationalist put away for ever?"

Paul flushed painfully. "Ah! you have sounded me truly—as truly as a man can who is himself genuine and clear as crystal. But you can't know the eternal problem I must face. You can't realize how the habit of shamming and posing fixes itself on one, until at last the *poseur* himself is deceived, hardly knowing what he wants, what he feels, what he is. But this time it is true. I tell you, it *must* be true. I have a reason you don't know."

"O, yes," Bob answered, "I know your reason. If you're not careful, that woman will marry you."

"If only she could be persuaded to do it! How did you guess?"

"A blind man can read it. You have all the symptoms of a man sickeningly, asininely in love. But don't do it, Paul. You say you want to be a real man. Be a whole man, too. Don't do it."

Paul laughed tolerantly. "Not accept supreme happiness? Why not?"

"Why not?" Bob exclaimed strongly. "Why not cut your life in two? Why not waste your strength on several objectives, instead of concentrating it on one? Why not become a slave to the whims and needs of a wife and family?"

"You deluded old cynic! You speak out of abysmal ignorance. I do *not* cut my life in two. I add to it, widen it, deepen it. I do not waste my energies; I gather renewed energy. Enslaved! Man, if to join my life to that of the woman I love, to care for her and protect her, be slavery, then I welcome the bonds."

"Humph! There's just one thing more shameful than slavery. That is willing slavery."

"Then," cried Paul, "I am the most abject of slaves."

"You are; and to a woman who—"

"Bob! Stop!"

And Bob, wondering, paused. For in the man before him he saw, not Paul—Paul the tempestuous, the dramatic, the somewhat florid—but a stranger, a momentarily inflexible, forceful man who spoke quietly, without rhetorical flourish, and commandingly.

"Bob," the stranger said simply, "you and I have never quarreled, and I owe you too much to quarrel with you now. But even you must say nothing harsh about Mrs. Gilbert. I know what she is, a woman who has suffered. There isn't a thing in her history to shame her. And—a man finds it hard to talk of such things to another, but—I love her, and if she will have me, I shall marry her. Please realize that I'm in earnest in this. I think we'd better not discuss it any more." He quietly left the office, and a moment later Bob heard him laughing merrily with Miss Jones.

So Bob was brought face to face with the supreme fact of the universe. The Force that holds the world together—Love.

"Yes," he thought bitterly. "You're a real man now—for a while, at least. That is no pose. But you're not real, as you think in your desire to be a force. You want that only to attract a woman who won't have you for what you are yourself. It's in your love for her that you have become real. She, not I, has made you so.

"But," he added savagely, "she shan't have you."

CHAPTER XI

THE GAUNTLET

MRS. HENRY SANGER, Sr., felt no compunctions when her machinations resulted in the marriage of her niece to Leonard Gilbert. That he was a weakling, a voluptuary within his means, counted for little beside the fact that his family had the *entree* to the "best circles." To Eleanor herself, taught to regard matrimony as a means to the widening of her social horizon, the marriage seemed a matter of course; Gilbert was merely a not unpleasant incident. Her uncle alone, of all her intimates, opposed the match. But as matrimony was recognized as within his wife's sphere of influence, his opposition was ineffective.

When Eleanor Sanger was married, she was a bright, rather highly strung and decidedly spoiled girl of nineteen. Marriage proved a bitter awakening. Six months, revealing to her both in their own intimate relations and in what she learned of his other life the weak sensuality of her husband, sufficed to transform her into a cold, self-contained woman, of an acidulous cynicism startling in one of her years. It was the weakness of the man, more than his immorality, that repelled her. She herself came of an active, sturdy stock whose virility and power of resistance had not been destroyed by generations of self-indulgence. Her experience discovered to her the existence of inherited ideals heretofore dormant in her. In the apparent impossibility of seeing those ideals realized in her own life, she was becoming bitter and reckless, when the incubus on her life was suddenly removed, two years after her marriage, by the pistol of a jealous Viennese courtezan.

Her experience immediately following Gilbert's murder must have hardened or broken the spirit of any woman. For two weeks she lived as in a nightmare. Practically without acquaintances in the Austrian capital, whither she had been carried by one of her husband's caprices, she was compelled to bear alone the burden of the squalid tragedy and its attendant notoriety. When her uncle reached her, he found a stony-eyed, icy woman who laughed bitterly at his proffered sympathy but acquiesced indifferently in whatever he proposed.

Then he atoned in part for his unwise guidance of her youth. The management of his great business interests he placed in the competent hands of Henry Sanger, Jr., Eleanor's brother, and devoted himself entirely to her. For three years they traveled as her whims dictated. Mr. Sanger, anxiously watching, saw the natural resiliency of youth gradually breaking down her hardness of spirit. In time the unwholesome effects of her married life disappeared, save a slight superficial cynicism and restlessness of spirit which made mental excitement a necessity to her. At twenty-five she was a brilliant, self-contained woman, with a taste for the unconventional which was not the least of her charms. Selfish she remained, as was the logical result of a lack of definite purpose in life other than to amuse herself and to forget.

Then Mr. Sanger died, leaving the bulk of his fortune to Henry Sanger, Jr., to Eleanor a comparative pittance. This curtailment of her inheritance was at her request. A quiet year in Germany, spent studying music, followed, and then she returned to the Steel City—to play her part in the making of Robert McAdoo.

Late in the afternoon, the day of Bob's talk with Paul concerning her, Mrs. Gilbert sat before a luxurious log fire in her own particular den. In a box by her side was an armful of roses, which she was arranging in a huge glass bowl. When the roses were bestowed to her satisfaction she re-read the note that had accompanied them, smiling at some sentiment expressed by the writer.

"You poor, romantic boy!" she said aloud. "One expects every minute that your conversation and letters will break into blank verse. I wish—I don't know what I wish," she concluded resentfully. She arose from her comfortable seat before the glowing logs and went to a window, where she stood gazing discontentedly out on the snowy lawn and street.

"That is what makes life such a jumble for me," she continued, her gaze becoming very wistful. "I don't know what I want, but whatever it is, it's fairly certain that I can't have it. I should never have come back to this city, where I have no interests. Just as I thought I had achieved content, I meet two men—absolutely out of my sphere. And the one stirs up the old, uncertain longings, which he can't satisfy. And the other stirs up the old, wicked recklessness that I had thought dead for ever." She sighed impatiently.

A half hour later she was still by the window, her eyes mechanically following the figure of a man walking up the street. When the pedestrian came to the Sanger entrance, he turned in and walked with swift, decided steps toward the house. Then Eleanor recognized him.

"Oh!" she gasped in astonishment and with a hint of dismay in her voice. She hastily left the window and crossed to the fireplace where she stood, her foot beating an impatient tattoo on the hearth, until there was a knock at the door and the butler entered.

"Mr. McAdoo to see you, madam."

"Show Mr. McAdoo into the library, Thomas," she replied, after a moment's hesitation. "And I shall not be at home the rest of the afternoon."

Why had Bob come to see Mrs. Gilbert? Bob himself was trying to answer the same question. When Paul left him in the morning, all Bob's old, primitive egoism welled up within him in a flood of savage resentment against the woman who had come into Paul's life, into both their lives. From the thing that stared him in the face—the hold his friendship for Paul had taken on his own life—he doggedly turned away his eyes. Blindly he felt that one of his possessions was threatened and that he must fight with a woman for supremacy over Paul. And for the first time in his life, Bob doubted the outcome. He must meet weapons whose edge he had never felt. Moreover, he knew nothing of the skill and spirit of his adversary, other than the significant fact that in two weeks she had shaken the hold he had needed six years to gain; and that other fact, even more significant, of a certain memory which he had never been able to cast out of mind or heart. The fighter's instinct to know his adversary gave the impulse that carried him to the Sanger library.

He heard the swish of skirts in the hall and rose to meet the enemy. It would not be accurate to say that Bob's heart went one beat faster, but he experienced a faint thrill of excitement, nevertheless. He had felt the same sensation once before. He smiled, as memory recalled that other time, in Haggin's saloon, when he faced the bully to fight him for the supremacy over a ward.

The portiéres were parted and she stood before him. Bob realized resentfully that here was a very beautiful woman, far more beautiful than either Kathleen Flinn or Mrs. Dunmeade, the only women of finer type he knew. For the fraction of a second, while she paused on the threshold, there was the same fencing of glances with which they had met in the theater—the adversaries' salute. Then her eyes softened to an amused gleam. While Bob stood still, she went over to him.

"I've been trying to decide whether this is a pleasant or unpleasant surprise," she smiled quizzically. "Which is it?" She held out her hand.

Bob looked at the outstretched hand, and shook his head coldly. The hand was at once returned to her side.

"You persist in the hostile attitude?"

"Why not? Let us have no false pretenses. I dislike you, you dislike me. If we stick to that, it will simplify matters."

She smiled again. "I *ought* to snub you by saying that I'm really totally indifferent to you. Only I fear the snub would be wasted on you."

"And it wouldn't be true."

"How do you know I don't like you?" The amused gleam in her eyes deepened.

"God forbid!" he ejaculated involuntarily. "But," he added grimly, "there's no danger."

"Don't be too sure of that," she warned him in gay malice. "You know, nothing wins a woman's liking so quickly as resistance. If you're not careful, I may end by liking you. That would be a terrible predicament—if we're to be enemies."

"It would!"

"Yes, for you," she flashed back. "Because then I should have to make *you* like *me.* But don't be nervous. I shan't try. You're more interesting as—you are."

"I am relieved." She noted with surprise that his ironical bow was easy and not ungraceful.

She laughed. "Come, I see your call is to be a pleasant surprise, after all. But won't you sit down? Since we're to be enemies, we may as well be comfortably so. No, not that chair—the one across the table; it matches your bigness better."

She looked at him curiously. "Do you know, for just a moment I was almost persuaded not to be at home to you this afternoon."

"I'd have stayed until you changed your mind, Mrs. Gilbert. I saw you at the window."

"In spite of my wish?"

He nodded. "There are some things which need thrashing out between us."

"Do the laws of courtesy mean so little to you? I suppose, though," she added in smiling insolence, "that men of your sort are insensible to these finer considerations."

"Men of my sort, Mrs. Gilbert, are apt to find that courtesy is demanded from them more often than it is extended to them. Is there any reason why I should fear to displease you?"

"There have been men who feared to displease me, Mr. McAdoo." Then she flushed with annoyance that she had boasted.

"I've no doubt there are such men." And Bob's tone did not convey a high tribute to the class. "But I don't happen to be one of them."

"Nor am I afraid of you, Mr. McAdoo," she countered. "I was, for one moment, that day in the theater. You startled me, having caught me—"

"Having caught you in a contemptible act," he interrupted quietly. "Trying to cast doubt upon the sincerity of a man who was a total stranger to you. That is what is called malicious mischief."

The amused gleam died out of her eyes. She flushed angrily. The anger was against herself.

"And have you never been guilty of malicious mischief?" she said coldly.

"That's not much of a defense, Mrs. Gilbert. And it doesn't hit me. I have never done mischief for mischief's sake."

"Nor have I," she defended herself warmly. "You were not a total stranger to me—"

"Ah! then you remember?" he exclaimed, surprised.

She compelled herself to answer coolly. "I remember what I have heard of you, if that is what you mean; what you are, what you have done. And I saw you in the convention. I have a constitutional antipathy for men of your type, Mr. McAdoo."

"People don't do that sort of thing merely because of constitutional antipathy." He shifted his chair and, leaning on the table, looked straight at her.

"You may put it on the score of personal dislike, if you choose," she answered indifferently. "You know," the lurking smile reappeared in her eyes, "you insisted that I dislike you."

"That explains it, but doesn't excuse it," he said, still in his quiet, even tone. "I've no objections to your dislike. It's probably very natural. I'm used to it. But it gave you no right to meddle in my affairs. I had done nothing to harm you. You had nothing to gain by attacking my motives—of which you could know nothing—or by making Paul Remington discontented with his advancement—as you have persisted in doing since. The women I know don't do that sort of thing. Even men of my sort, whom you despise"—there was a trace of bitterness in these last words—"would call it contemptible."

He is a wise general who knows when to abandon an untenable position. Eleanor suddenly abandoned hers. She turned and, leaning on the table, faced him frankly.

"You are right," she said quietly. "It *was* contemptible. And I have been ashamed of myself ever since. I was ashamed when you caught me at it. I had seen you in the convention. Your utter composure irritated me unreasonably. Besides I had heard of you before. What I heard wasn't altogether to your credit, perhaps not altogether just. I yielded to an impulse, and meddled gratuitously in your affairs. I had no right to do it, no excuse. I apologize."

If she intended her apology to mollify him, she failed. It had the opposite effect. He resented her frankness.

He resented the moral courage which enabled her honestly to acknowledge her fault. It angered him that she should put herself in the right, because it took away, in part at least, his excuse for hostility. Bob felt the need of an excuse for hating and hurting her.

An ugly sneer twisted his mouth, as he replied. "It's easy enough to apologize, but what good is it after the mischief is done."

"I hardly expected you to be generous," she answered his sneer gravely. "But now—what? You didn't come here merely to convict me of a dishonorable act, I suppose?"

"Hardly. I'm a busy man. I suppose I came to make a useless request."

"What is the request—or is it a command?"

He looked at her steadily for a minute before he answered. She saw the line of his lips become thinner and the muscles of his jaw tighten. "To let Paul Remington go."

"You take too much for granted. I'm not holding him. He is free to go wherever he chooses."

"That's not true. He has the misfortune to be in love with you. Therefore he is your slave."

She shrugged her shoulders skeptically. "It will do him no harm. And he will get over it."

"He *shall* get over it. And it does hurt him. It harms any man to be played with by a pretty woman."

"Ah! But suppose I shouldn't be that sort of woman, suppose I should become interested in him?"

"You will not, because you *are* that sort of woman. But it would make no difference anyhow. It would still do him harm."

"It seems," she replied mockingly, "that Mr. Mc-

Adoo, in spite of his boasted frendship, cares nothing for the happiness of his friend."

"Your interest doesn't necessarily mean his happiness, does it?"

"My interest isn't to be despised, Mr. McAdoo."

"Despised? No. But feared—yes. It would be a dangerous luxury, Mrs. Gilbert."

She leaned back in her chair and looked up at him with an irritating, insolent smile. "Dangerous, Mr. McAdoo? To whom? To him—or to *you?*"

"To him!"

She laughed skeptically.

Bob's brow knitted in a troubled, angry frown. This beautiful woman, whose life and standards were the very antitheses of his, in whose spirit was a quality that seemed to mock his worshiped strength, who had the power to arouse what his most dangerous political foes had never been able to stir within him—strong personal enmity—was a mystery to him. Her laugh impeached his strength. It convicted him of *fear*—fear of a woman whom he could crush with his hands, but whose inner life he was powerless to reach! It put upon him the strange, unaccustomed necessity of defending, justifying himself to her. His hands gripped the edge of the table fiercely.

"You won't understand," he said at last, slowly, "when I explain it. You're right when you say I care nothing for his happiness—at least, what you mean by the word. You don't mean happiness, Mrs. Gilbert. You mean—to glut the appetite, to yield to the mating instinct, to follow the lines of least resistance. Only the very strong can afford happiness as you mean it. To a weak man that sort of 'happiness' means crippling his natural force, enslaving himself to outside influences. There is only one true happiness—the content that comes from being a real, original force. The man who would be this, Mrs. Gilbert, must own and control himself absolutely. For Paul Remington's greater, true happiness I do care."

For a minute she studied him in silence, frankly and intently. Then she laughed. "I had no idea you could talk so well."

"Humph!" he growled, struggling to control his rising anger. "Any one can learn to talk. It takes brains to learn silence."

"A maker of epigrams! And a philosopher, too! I have read somewhere that philosophy is the refuge of the loser. But you're a chronic winner."

"Doesn't that prove that my philosophy isn't to be ridiculed?"

"The philosophy of a successful man is always to be taken seriously. I wasn't laughing at what you said, but at my first notion of you. Decidedly I must revise it. Only you haven't been as inexorable with yourself as you would like to be with Mr. Remington."

"But I have!" he contradicted. "I'm a primitive man, Mrs. Gilbert, with all the elemental passions and weaknesses. But I haven't been a slave to my weaknesses. Do you suppose I don't tire of the unceasing grind? I haven't had one day's rest from work in twenty-one years. The physical appetites are as strong in me as in other men. I have lived a clean physical life. I, too, am capable of dreaming of ideal women. I have refused to allow the mating instinct to influence me. Do you suppose I don't possess the lazy instinct for peace? I have never hesitated to make an enemy. You boasted that men have feared to displease you. I could make a finer boast, because I have been inexorable with myself. Men fear you because you appeal to their weaknesses. They fear me because I have made myself strong."

"You're inconsistent—if what you say is true. You have proclaimed yourself Mr. Remington's friend."

"You're like the rest," he cried in angry defensiveness. "You think I became his friend because I couldn't resist his fascination. I do feel the personal attraction for him, but I could have overcome that. It doesn't control me. I accepted his friendship because I saw in him natural force, that he couldn't realize himself, but which I could realize for him."

"In other words, you accepted his friendship that you might experiment with your 'forcefulness' upon him. And to carry your experiment through you force upon him, too, your ascetic, stoic selfishness—if that isn't a paradox. I'm frankly a selfish woman, Mr. McAdoo, but beside you I'm an angel of mercy—if what you say is true. But what right have you to say that he shan't be happy in his own way?"

"Because I give him something better. I found him a man of possibilities. I make him a man of realized possibilities. He was a dreamer. He is learning to make his dreams come true. He possessed energy. He is learning to control and apply it. He was superficial, a creature of appetites. He is becoming a man of deep purpose. He is learning to seek and acquire the substance of things. He was a play-actor. He will become a real man."

"Or another Robert McAdoo? It would be a charity to save him from such a fate—if what you say is true."

"That's the third time for that phrase. What do you mean?"

"If you're not merely trying to hide from yourself the fact that you have been what you call weak. If you're not making your inexorable philosophy a mask for your fear that some woman will win a stronger hold over him than you have."

"It isn't *some* woman whose influence I object to. It is *you.*"

"That proves it," she smiled triumphantly. "Your crude philosophy is only a shallow excuse for what is really the pettiest of weakness."

"That is not true."

"And you know it yourself. That's why you're so angry at my statement. But," she added carelessly, "it doesn't matter much, whether it is true or false. The point of this argument is that you come to me, whom you profoundly dislike, and ask me to send Paul Remington away. You give as your excuse for this, that you care nothing for his happiness. And you expect me to adopt the same inhuman philosophy as my reason. But what about *me?*"

"He is nothing to you."

"As you mean it, no—just now. But for the future—why not? You never can tell. Mr. Remington is talented. He is magnetic. I like him better than I like most men. It is quite possible that I shall in time develop a deeper interest in him. And besides, Mr. McAdoo, your opposition gives him a new value. Did you forget to consider, when you came to ask me to send him away, what about my happiness?" She concluded her question with a smile.

"Mrs. Gilbert, your happiness did not—does not—enter into my calculations at all."

"You're honest, at least. Still I *am* a human being and, one would think, my possible happiness shouldn't be wholly ignored. Why did you come to see me?"

Bob did not answer at once. When he did, his voice had resumed the even, matter-of-fact tone that he used in ordinary conversation.

"Can we explain our impulses? It was on impulse. I never yet yielded to an impulse but I regretted it afterward. Explain it as you choose—I don't want him under your influence. I'm not in the habit of begging. But it occurred to me to come and ask you to send him away—he won't leave you of his own accord—and I came. That is all. It was very foolish."

He rose to leave, but she stayed him. "Wait, please. This has been a very unusual conversation, and we may as well finish it while we have the opportunity. We aren't likely to meet again—at least, we both hope so." She smiled faintly. "Won't you sit down?"

Bob sat down and silently awaited what she had to say. She leaned her head against the back of her chair, turning her eyes from Bob to look wistfully into the fire.

"Mr. McAdoo," she began, still gazing into the fire, "that was the first sensible thing you have said to me, because you said it without deliberate intention to hurt me. Both times we have met, we have succeeded in striking the antagonistic note. We seem fated to dislike each other. We can't explain it and we can't help it, I suppose. But I'm going to be honest with you."

She paused, as though uncertain how to continue. Winter's early dusk was falling outside, leaving only the firelight to light the room. She was very beautiful, as the soft glow fell upon her face.

"We're a good deal alike, you and I. You have taken everything you want. I've been given everything—except the things that count most. We're both very selfish. You make the excuse that you *have* to be selfish to realize your ambitions. I have the excuse that life hasn't treated me very kindly—and neither excuse is valid, I suspect. You're not a slave to conscience, and I—well, I'm afraid I'll never let conscience stand between me and happiness. You have few friends. I've had plenty to admire me because I'm not bad to look at and can turn a witty phrase occasionally. But none has ever cared for me because none saw in me those womanly qualities which are so much finer than beauty or wit. Paul Remington seems to fill both our wants. He is your one friend. He cares for me because he thinks I possess qualities I don't possess, but which he—he makes me want to acquire. I'm not in love with him, but I'd *like* to be. He seems my only hope of escape from becoming the most pitiable of creatures—a lonely, cynical, selfish, loveless woman. I wonder why I tell you this?" She leaned forward abruptly. "What are we going to do about it?"

"That is what I came to find out."

"No, you came to tell me what I must do. You put the issue squarely; one of us must retire in the other's favor. That amounts to a challenge, doesn't it? It's too bad we have this dislike to contend with. Your natural state is fighting, and I suppose you don't mind one fight the more. But I don't want to fight for my happiness—or possible happiness. Especially when I run the risk of losing it altogether. We both run that risk. Don't you think," there was the faintest twinkle in her eyes, "don't you think it would be wise—don't you think it would be good *politics*—to ignore our dislike—and share the spoils?"

"No." But despite the curtness of his reply, she thought she detected a relaxing of the corners of his mouth.

"I believe he has a sense of humor, after all," she thought. "Can we afford the risk?" she said aloud, pressing home her fancied advantage.

"I can't afford not to take the risk."

"You are implacable. I'm not in the habit of begging men not to be my enemies, Mr. McAdoo."

"Is this the way you twist Remington around your finger?"

Her gasp of astonishment, if simulated, was a fine bit of acting. "Do you think—do you for an instant dream—that I'm tempting you to forget your dislike of me?"

"*Trying* to tempt me."

For answer she burst into a delicious, girlish laugh. "O, I'm glad you came. I haven't had so much fun since I was a girl."

"So you take it as a joke?"

She nodded gaily, still laughing.

"I think I should have done better to let you die in the mills."

This time her look of bewilderment was genuine. "I don't understand—why!—"

For an instant the luxurious, firelit library faded away from her sight. She stood amid the grime and roar of the mills. . . . She felt herself caught in an iron grasp which dragged her toward death. . . . Then a strong hand seized her, and she stood before a hot-eyed young giant. . . .

"Is it possible? Yes, you *are* the man who saved me in the mills. It is hard to realize. He was an uncouth, ungrammatical young ruffian, as I remember, while you—you are an educated—" She hesitated.

"An educated ruffian," he concluded dryly.

"It is you who say it, not I," she answered quickly, with a smile. "But I can hardly realize it yet. That was—let me see—yes, eleven years ago. Eleven years! And in that time you have risen from a common workman to the great political leader—or boss. I knew in a general way, of course, that you had risen from obscurity to your present prominence, but I never quite realized what it meant. It is really remarkable. I congratulate you."

She regarded him with a new respect; a respect which Bob, remembering the girl who had flouted him as of a lower order of creation, resented.

"I'm no more than I was then. I *have* more, but I am no more."

"Yes, that is true. What you are now was in you then. You have only grown, bigger and stronger, but not different. More's the pity!" she added mockingly. "—Perhaps?" To which Bob made no answer.

A detail of the scene in the mills recurred to her. "Ah! I remember that I forgot to thank you for saving my life. That was very ungrateful. I suppose I should do so now. It really was very good of you."

"You needn't thank me. Besides," he added grimly, "it was unintentional, I assure you. Purely an impulse."

"And you always regret your impulses, I believe."

"Well—" he hesitated. "Not always—quite."

She laughed uncertainly. "What do you mean by that, I wonder?—But I must revise my estimate of the situation. It is quite wonderful—more so than your rapid rise—our meeting again in this way. But surely you can't expect me to remain at swords' points with the man who saved my life?"

His face hardened. "Then keep out of my way."

Again she studied his set face frankly, searchingly. "You mean it," she said in a curiously regretful tone. "That is part of you. I remember you said the same to me that night in the mills. 'Keep out of my way.' It explains your life, doesn't it? You have gone steadily, relentlessly forward, brushing aside every one who stood in your way. And now that I seem to interfere with your plans, you are quite capable of sweeping me aside—or Mr. Remington either—without thought of what it means to us. You are relentless!"

"Then will you keep out of my way?"

"Don't, please. Threats aren't nice. You're quite sure there is no peaceable solution?"

"Quite."

"And you refuse absolutely to consider me in the matter?"

"It amounts to that, I suppose."

She twisted and untwisted her handkerchief for a moment, staring reflectively at the operation. Then she turned to face him again. "Suppose," she asked slowly, "suppose I were to send him away, would you take it as a mark of gratitude for saving my life, as a favor to you?"

Bob hesitated. After all, it was the easiest solution; and sometimes concession is victory. . . . And she was very beautiful, very alluring, so far out of his reach. With a pang he realized that the promise of the girl in the mills had borne fruit, that this fair woman, child of privilege as she was, possessed a fine courage and self-reliance against which his own crude strength might hurl itself in vain—and that he could never beat her at the game he proposed. He yielded to her a reluctant admiration. . . . With an effort he recalled his resentment against her and the old prideful belief in his self-sufficiency.

"No! You owe me nothing, and I want no favors from you."

"Can't you see," she urged alluringly, "I'm holding out the olive branch? Haven't you enough enemies, Mr. McAdoo? Remember that one more than enough is as strong as an army."

"No! I don't want peace with you."

They both rose, Mrs. Gilbert facing him with a laugh in her eyes.

"So be it!" she said pleasantly. "I must accept your hostility. You pay me a fine compliment, Mr. McAdoo. And do you realize what a weapon you have placed in my hands? I'm not deceived by your unnatural philosophy, nor are you now, I think. The truth is, you're jealous, jealous as a school-girl, Mr. McAdoo. And afraid—of me. I can be a very dangerous enemy—if I choose. If I should choose to accept your challenge and to take away from you your dearest possession—your *happiness,* Mr. McAdoo—you would be helpless to prevent it. You have no weapons to fight me. And you know it! Else, why are you here to-day?" She laughed.

"I wish to God," he cried bitterly, "I had let you die in the mills!"

Smiling, she watched him turn and leave her. Then she sat down before the fire, looking into its flames with amused eyes. The gleam of amusement faded into reflectiveness, reflectiveness into wistfulness. She sighed.

CHAPTER XII

SANGER'S OFFER

LATE in the evening, a few days after his call on Mrs. Gilbert, Bob returned home from a hard day's work. The election was only a month away, and the campaign was in full swing. He had spent the day meeting with supporters from different parts of the city, hearing reports and making suggestions with a detailed knowledge of conditions which often made his lieutenants to marvel.

There had been little in the reports to annoy him. His organization was intact, working like the well-oiled machine it was. Reports from the enemy's camp gave further cause for satisfaction. The independent-Democratic candidate was not making the headway expected. Yet Bob went home disturbed in mind. The day had been passed among men who were devoting their time and energy in his interest. But through all their conferences he had been conscious of an unaccustomed, oppressive sense of loneliness. And he had not seen Remington since their interview in his office.

When he entered the house, he saw Kathleen sitting in the library, sewing. She looked up with a bright smile, as he hesitated before the door.

"May I come in?" he queried doubtfully, as though not quite sure of his welcome.

"Since when this timidity?" she laughed. "Of course, come in. I was just thinking about you. Mother was bewailing to-day that we don't see much of you, now the campaign has started."

"Well," he looked at his watch, "if it won't make you sleepy, I'll let you administer your company for half an hour."

"You speak as though my company were bad medicine!"

"Paul says it's the best medicine for all ills."

"O, Paul always speaks in figures."

Bob smiled pleasantly. "I'm sure he's right. You're a very soothing person, Kathleen. I suppose it's because you have no doubts yourself, all your problems are solved."

"And have you doubts and unsolved problems?"

"It's an everlasting struggle," he said, a trifle wearily, she thought. "The old doubts and problems are no sooner solved than new ones arise." He stopped abruptly.

Kathleen asked no further questions. For a while they sat in silence. Presently she became aware that he was regarding her intently. She glanced up quickly.

"Caught you, didn't I? You look at me as though I were one of your problems."

"You are. But I wasn't trying to solve you. I gave that up long ago. I was looking at your hair. It's getting gray."

"That's very unkind of you," she reproved him smilingly, "to remind me that I'm growing old."

"Old! You're two years younger than I."

"I'm nearly thirty-five," she said quietly. "In all probability half of our lives has been lived. A few more years and we shall be in the sere and yellow leaf, you and I."

Bob looked at her in surprise, as though he had just come upon a new and disturbing fact. "I've never thought of that," he said slowly. Then he smote his chair angrily. "Why must we grow old and feeble and contemptible?"

"Contemptible?" She looked up quickly. "You're an iconoclast, Bob. Ever since the world was created, it has been reverencing age for its experience and wisdom."

"That's because the world is too young to have acquired wisdom. Why should we reverence age—which means feebleness and decay? It is the most contemptible thing in life. Youth only—vitality, strength—is admirable. To grow old is the easiest thing we do; all one has to do is to exist a few years. Experience is no credit; we all acquire experience, we can't help it. As for the wisdom of age, what is that? One must be a fool indeed not to pick up some wisdom in the course of fifty or sixty years."

"Your logic is merciless. Can't you leave us just one comforting illusion?"

"Yes, it is an illusion. We don't really reverence age. We all despise it in others and hate it in ourselves. Reverence for age is just one of the lies we keep telling as a sop to our cowardice. We must all grow old and we must all have an excuse for tolerance from the young and strong."

"Yes," Kathleen assented, "we must all grow old. But age has its compensations."

"Decay its compensations? I fail to see them."

"Faith, Hope, Love. And the greatest of these is Love."

Bob looked at her suspiciously. He was never quite sure when Kathleen's observations were meant to have a pointed application to his case. But before he could answer, the door-bell rang. He frowned.

"I had forgotten," he exclaimed regretfully. "I have an appointment with Sanger at ten."

Kathleen gathered up her sewing and arose. He looked at her doubtfully.

"Are you very tired?"

"No, but you'd better use this room. It's well warmed."

"If you don't mind, I wish you'd stay. It may be just as well to have a third person present."

"But Mr. Sanger may not like it," she objected hesitatingly.

"Mr. Sanger may like it or not," Bob observed carelessly. "Sit down."

He went to the door himself and let Sanger in. A minute later the two men entered the library. Kathleen saw a tall man in evening dress, who bore himself with an air of quiet confidence.

"Miss Flinn," Bob introduced him, "this is Mr. Sanger. He's my immediate enemy just now."

Sanger bowed genially and laughed. "A very friendly enemy just at present."

"I am very glad to meet one of our enemies—especially if he be friendly," she smiled. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Sanger?"

"Surely not *our* enemies, Miss Flinn!"

"I'm Irish and so my friends' enemies are mine, of course."

"All the more reason why Mr. McAdoo and I should make peace," he answered gracefully.

"Don't believe her," Bob interrupted with a smile. "Miss Flinn can't be an enemy to any one. She's one of those rare persons who love their fellow-men."

"Ah!" Sanger said. "Then the tribe of Abou ben Adhem is not yet extinct?"

"It is a bigger tribe than you may think," Kathleen responded, although she flushed slightly. "And still growing, Mr. Sanger."

"Your generosity to your fellows does you credit, Miss Flinn," Sanger returned, as he seated himself.

He drew a deep breath of solid comfort and turned to Bob. "You're a lucky man, Mr. McAdoo, to be able to come home to such cozy surroundings—and such delightful company," he said, half enviously. "For myself, I'm not so fortunate. My wife is occupied with her social duties and I'm thrown on the tender mercies of my sister, Mrs. Gilbert. Though I shouldn't complain of such a lot. You know her, I believe," he addressed Bob. "She told me you called the other day." There was a question in his eyes.

"Yes," Bob answered curtly. Kathleen glanced in quick surprise toward Bob.

"My sister is a rare woman," Sanger continued. "She has had a great deal of trouble in her life. Her husband was Leonard Gilbert," he added in explanation.

"Ah! I remember. It was very sad," Kathleen said gently.

"She has borne her trouble with a splendid courage," Sanger went on, and added with a smile, "You see, I'm very proud of her. Your friend Remington, I understand, is very much in love with her." He looked inquiringly at Bob. Kathleen saw the latter's face harden.

"It would be a very suitable match," Sanger paused for a moment. "In fact, certain conditions being assured, I may say I should approve of it highly. Socially, it might leave something to be desired—"

"Mr. Remington comes of a very fine family," Kathleen interrupted quickly. "He is of the Vermont Remingtons."

"Ah! I have heard of them," Sanger assented courteously. "As you say, a fine old stock. But that is really immaterial. He's a splendid fellow personally and a rising man. And my sister has too much good sense to be swayed by social considerations. She really has little taste for society."

"I suppose," Bob broke in, "you didn't come here for match-making. Let's get down to business."

"As you please," Sanger agreed coldly. He looked inquiringly at Kathleen.

"Miss Flinn will be present," Bob answered the look, "at my request."

Sanger hesitated, but as Kathleen, apparently absorbed in her sewing, evinced no intention of leaving, he yielded gracefully. "Certainly, Miss Flinn's presence will be a guaranty of a peaceful interview. I'm a lover of peace."

"On your own terms," Bob grunted skeptically.

"You misunderstand me, Mr. McAdoo. I'm willing to make concessions—that is, within proper limits."

He reclined comfortably in his chair and placed his hands together, finger-tip accurately meeting finger-tip.

"Circumstances of which I am perhaps the victim," he began, "make it necessary for me to take an active part for the future in our local and state politics."

"Haven't you already been somewhat active?"

Sanger waved his hand carelessly. "Tentatively, tentatively only, Mr. McAdoo. Hereafter I propose to be more active—and to better effect, I hope. Certain ventures in which I am interested, individually and in connection with other large investors of our state, make this imperative."

"The constitution guarantees every man the right to become a politician, I believe."

"Precisely. Unfortunately, in the present campaign I find myself compelled to oppose your election. I regret it exceedingly and, frankly, I'm here to propose that we work in harmony in the future."

"That comes rather late."

"Please don't refuse until you have heard me out. Allow me to explain our position. For several years certain gentlemen, all large investors—you will understand who they are—including my late uncle and myself, have kept William Murchell in power in this state, at considerable expense to ourselves. In return we had the right to demand protection for our interests. Murchell, however, has of late proven very ungrateful. He has passed under the influence of John Dunmeade. Dunmeade, Mr. McAdoo, is a dangerous man, an utter radical, an impracticable dreamer, a man of socialistic tendencies. His influence in our politics is a menace to individual property rights."

"And particularly to your interests. Speak in words of one syllable, Mr. Sanger. I'm a politician, not a political economist."

Sanger's eyes narrowed slightly, but he went on imperturbably. "My dislike of Dunmeade is only political. His wife is my cousin. In fact, it was out of consideration for her that my uncle prevailed upon his fellow investors to bear with her husband and Murchell the past five years. I myself never allow personal considerations to influence business policy. And the time has come when their ingratitude can no longer be borne with. The events leading up to Dunmeade's nomination and the action of the late legislature have been too much. We are determined that Murchell and Dunmeade must go out of politics completely."

"Humph! How are you going to do it?"

Sanger smiled confidently. "We shall find the means. Two years from now a new governor, legislature and United States senator must be elected. They must be absolutely independent of Murchell and Dunmeade."

"But not independent of you?"

"Precisely. Which brings me to your case. Permit me to say, Mr. McAdoo, I have a deep admiration for you. You have a remarkable genius for politics. You can be very useful to us—and we can be very useful to you. If you are elected—which is by no means assured—the city organization will be absolutely under your control. With this city and our share of the country districts and Adelphia, which you must admit we already control, we are certain of setting Murchell and Cousin Dunmeade aside. I suggest," he concluded, "that you come in with us."

"Purely out of philanthropic belief in the sanctity of individual property rights, I suppose?"

"Not at all. We don't demand disinterested motives. In fact, we should suspect the sincerity of such motives, if alleged. We expect to make it worth your while. We will, to begin with, contribute liberally to your campaign funds."

"As liberally as you have already contributed to Larkin's fund?"

"You are well informed," Sanger said, his face betraying surprise.

"It's my business to be well informed."

Sanger eyed Bob narrowly before continuing. "That proves the propriety of my next suggestion. We'll do more than contribute to your campaign. When Murchell is retired, we must have some one to take his place at the head of the reformed organization. I speak for my partners in this enterprise when I say that, if you assist us to beat him, we will put you in Murchell's place as state leader." Kathleen started, her work arrested.

"Upon the condition, of course, that you will secure us the protection and legislation we desire," Sanger continued. "And as a guaranty of our good faith we will consent to your friend Remington as next governor."

"Consent? I thought you were to make me boss?"

"Of course, we should have to be consulted in all important nominations."

"Then you don't propose to give me the free hand you gave Murchell?"

"Frankly, no. We can't take that risk again—with any man."

"Hmmm!" Bob murmured reflectively. "And who is your candidate for senator?"

Sanger laughed. "I shouldn't object to a term in the senate myself. I think I'm not entirely incompetent.

You see, I'm quite frank with you, exposing all our plans."

"No, Mr. Sanger," Bob answered coolly, "you're not frank. You have told me nothing I didn't know—or suspect. Let me state the case to you exactly as it is. My election is assured; nothing you can do will prevent it. You've already tried to prevent it. You personally were responsible for the Hemenway business. You personally were responsible for the nomination of Larkin, with the one intention of breaking me. But you don't believe he will be elected. And that's why you come to me. You don't like me. You don't trust me. You'll go on secretly doing all you can to beat me. If I'm beaten, you will forget we ever made a deal. But if I'm elected, you will expect me to keep my part of the bargain. Your offer isn't honestly made, Mr. Sanger."

"My dear sir," Sanger protested earnestly, "the word of a gentleman—"

"The word of you gentlemen of finance," Bob interrupted with a sneer, "is worth just what it *has* to be worth."

"You are unjust," Sanger answered with unruffled serenity, "but I'll not argue that. However, if a novice may be permitted to instruct an experienced politician, I may remind you that politics costs money and that you're not a rich man, comparatively. The last two years have cost you more than two hundred thousand dollars. Four years more would see you bankrupt."

"*You* are well informed," Bob said, smiling comfortably.

"It's my business to be well informed," Sanger retorted affably. "Frankly I see nothing before you but complete political extinction, unless you join us. Because we're provisioned for a long siege and you are not. It strikes me that, whether we trust you or not, you *must* trust us. Do I put the situation fairly?"

"As you see it, no doubt," Bob replied, unmoved.

"There is, of course," Sanger continued significantly, "your friend Remington to be considered. If I may judge from appearances, he is exceedingly anxious to marry my sister. I can't answer for her—that is, absolutely. But it isn't impossible that she should come to share his feeling. I have never known her to display the interest in any other man that she gives Remington. Mrs. Gilbert, unfortunately, hasn't been educated to domestic economy. And under the terms of my uncle's will she is dependent upon me for her income. Of course, I couldn't be expected to approve of a match with one who is trying to injure me."

Kathleen saw Bob's face light up queerly. "Like you, I don't allow personal considerations to interfere with business policy," he said impassively.

"Think it over. The matter doesn't require immediate adjustment."

Bob's countenance set in what Irishtown termed his "fightin' face." He rose to end the interview. "I can give you our answer now," he said coldly. Then he saw Kathleen looking up at him eagerly, proudly. His face relaxed in a whimsical smile.

"What shall we say, Kathleen?"

"Will you let me answer for you?"

Bob nodded. Kathleen looked at him long and searchingly. Then she arose and turned to Sanger, who also was on his feet.

"Mr. McAdoo says," she spoke quietly, "that to try to bribe him through his friendship is useless, because his friendship is sincere. Nor does your offer of state leadership tempt him. Mr. McAdoo is pledged to certain policies which he couldn't carry out if he joined you. He will keep his word. Mr. McAdoo says also that if you oppose Governor Dunmeade and Mr. Murchell, he will support them to the end. Your money may win out, but there are worse things than losing a good fight, Mr. Sanger. One of them is dishonest victory. We—" she gave Bob a quick look; he was not smiling—"we had just decided, when you came in, Mr. Sanger, that we are no longer young. And we have dreams of doing a great deal of good for the world before we are old and it is too late."

"Very beautiful sentiments, I'm sure, Miss Flinn—quite unique in this prosaic century," Sanger smiled. "And are these views yours also, Mr. McAdoo?"

Bob's answer was quietly spoken. "Miss Flinn overstates my motives, but as to your proposal and my support of Murchell and Dunmeade, she is quite right."

Sanger shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "I was quite sure of it before I came. I don't know just what you want, Mr. McAdoo. I'm quite positive it isn't to do 'a great deal of good for the world.' But I was equally positive that your plans wouldn't fit in with ours. I only made the offer because it was urged upon me by others who are in this with me. My own policy is to break, not buy off, opposition."

He bowed gracefully to Kathleen.

"There can be no doubt as to the genuineness of your motives, Miss Flinn. Good night. I'm sorry the outcome of the scrimmage must be disappointing to you."

Bob followed Sanger into the hallway and silently watched the millionaire don his overcoat. As he was pulling on his gloves Sanger remarked:

"It's a good thing for us, McAdoo, that you haven't fooled the world as you have Miss Flinn. It's a better thing that you aren't what she thinks you. There is only one person in the world that I fear, the fanatic. He possesses moral passion. Moral passion is as uncertain, and therefore as dangerous, as lightning or women. You haven't it."

"Good night," Bob answered, as he held open the door.

When he returned to the library, Kathleen was sewing quietly once more.

"Well," he remarked, sitting down, "as Paul would say, I have burned my bridges behind me."

"What a shame he is so conscienceless! He has such nice manners."

"Humph! You women are all alike, judging a man by his outside. I don't like an assassin any better because he stabs me politely. I hate to say it of any man, but he is almost worse than I am.

"And now," he added, "he has given me my warning."

"But you can beat him," Kathleen answered with loyal confidence.

"Now, yes. But in the long run, probably not," he said grimly. "I know the game, Kathleen. Money is the only political orator nowadays who gets a hearing. And my money won't last me more than three or four years more at the present rate, as he knows. Sooner or later their millions will get me, unless some miracle hastens a popular revolution—or unless I start grafting again."

"Have you stopped, then?"

"I haven't made a penny out of politics in the last six years."

"And you won't begin again." She did not ask a question.

"No." His tone was curiously regretful. "I won't. I used to, without a thought. But now I hate the notion. I don't understand it," he cried impatiently.

Kathleen snipped her thread and rose. "My dear boy!" she laughed. "Yes, boy! For all your years and wisdom you're still nothing but a big child. But *I* am a middle-aged woman and very wise indeed. And I have faith. The miracle will come. I have seen greater miracles than a popular revolution. Good night."

"I suppose she means me," Bob thought complainingly, when she was gone. "I'm afraid she's right. I'm a stupendous fraud. I'm afraid I'm developing a conscience.

"But why?" he demanded impatiently. "Why?"

CHAPTER XIII

TEMPTATIONS

PAUL REMINGTON impatiently flung aside the book he had been trying to read. It was Sunday, and to Paul the first day of the week was always distinctly oppressive. For the Sabbath in the Steel City is like unto the Lord's day in no other city. The mills never cease, the street-cars rattle irreverently, a few godless, reckless souls risk damnation in the hereafter and loss of caste in the present by taking the air and bodily recreation. But for the most part the city, as becomes a sober Scotch Presbyterian community, remembers its Fourth Commandment and remains conscientiously and painfully indoors; a vague but perceptible atmosphere of melancholy piety broods over the city.

Paul proceeded to lose himself in a profound reverie. An hour later he was still lost in his dreaming. He came to himself with a start. He shuddered.

"It's no use. This day has got on my nerves. The time when myself and my dreams were all the company I needed is gone. Dreams are mighty poor heart food. And I'm starving. I haven't seen her for two days and I can't wait another day—another hour—another minute. I suppose," he added complainingly, "most people would call this damn foolishness."

He rose and passed into his bedroom, where he carefully changed his attire. His toilet completed, he stepped back and surveyed, with a nod of frank satisfaction, the well-groomed figure in the mirror. As he looked, something in the reflection caused him to frown. He passed into the other room, took from the mantel an old miniature and returned to the mirror. Critically he compared the face in the miniature with that reflected in the mirror.

"I had forgotten," he muttered, "how strong the resemblance is. O, why should I, with my heritage, be placed where control of passion and steadfast loyalty are necessary? Your face—this resemblance—are a continual prophecy of my utter and ultimate futility. But I'll end that right here."

Roughly he tore the frame open and removed the painted ivory. Then he strode into the other room again and cast the portrait on the hot coals in the grate.

"There, you detestable renegade, you and your bequest go out of my life for ever. To win her without hurting Bob—to become worthy of her love and his friendship—if I'm to do that, I can't have you to remind me of my temperamental defects. Confidence is half the battle, as Bob says."

For a minute or so the heat made no impression on the miniature. Then the paint began to swell and crack. To Paul's fancy it seemed that the somber face on the coals changed its expression, that over it spread a mocking, malicious leer.

"Ah! I know what you mean by that. That I can throw you into the flames, but that here in my face is a likeness I can't destroy—and here in my heart, too. Well, we'll see."

He snatched up the poker and savagely jabbed the miniature until its fragments were buried in the coals. But when this was done, he continued to stare into the fire, as though fascinated. His grasp relaxed and the poker fell to the hearth with a sharp clang. His bent attitude straightened.

"It's true," he groaned, "it's true! This isn't cowardice, but knowledge. I'm a traitor at heart already. If it came to a final choice between him and her, he might burn in hell before I would leave her."

A half-hour later Paul was ushered into the Sanger drawing-room. Eleanor not appearing at once, he wandered through an open door into the music-room, at one end of which had been installed a small pipe-organ. Now modern science has perfected the organ that the souls of men might find expression.

And Paul, of the many talents, without being a great musician, knew how to make the organ respond to his soul's mood. He seated himself and began to play. His idle fingering gradually took form in a passionate, florid gust of melody that filled the big house. Then the stormy mood died away and the organ sang a weird, minor refrain. Eleanor, entering unobserved by the player, stood leaning against a chair near him, regarding him with an odd look, in which admiration and pity—perhaps a shade of contempt—mingled. For several minutes he played on, apparently not noticing her presence.

At last, without turning or ceasing his playing, he spoke. "I can't see you, but I know you are there."

"Lawyer, politician, orator, musician! The gods have been good to you," she murmured quizzically.

"Yes," he answered, with a trace of bitterness. "Jack of all trades and master of none. But first and above all, Mrs. Gilbert's most sincere devotee."

"Is being Mrs. Gilbert's devotee a trade, then?" she queried idly.

"At least, it's more than a profession."

"Come, that is beneath you. A pun, you know—"

"Yes, and my spirits are as low as my wit to-day." He ceased to play and began to examine a pile of music lying beside him.

She struck the back of the chair, in vexation half pretended, half real. "Are you ever in the same mood for two consecutive days? Your moods are as various—as mine."

"I'm constant in at least one thing—but you won't let me speak of that," he responded gloomily. "To-day I'm possessed of a thousand devils. Sing."

He opened a sheet of music before him and struck into the accompaniment. And Eleanor, standing where she was, sang.

Eleanor Gilbert could sing. And that afternoon she sang as she had never sung before. For in her singing that day she found expression for what she had never quite dared to put into words, the longing for something higher and better than had yet come into her life, to fulfil the ultimate woman's mission—a longing which of late had been growing more and more poignant within her. As she sang, her heart flooded with kindliness toward the handsome, romantic young man before her.

"I wish," she thought once, when at the end of a verse the organ took up the refrain, "I wish I were your mother. I wonder, can this be the beginning of love—and for *you?*"

Song followed song, until at length Paul turned from the organ and faced her.

"Thank you," he said simply.

She rested her elbows on the back of the chair, folding her hands and dropping her chin on them.

"How are those devils now?"

"Gone, every one of them. You're the most eminently satisfactory person in the world. I came here restless, morbid, filled with dismal forebodings. You sing—the demons flee."

"O, no. It wasn't I who worked the magic, but your imagination. The demons existed only in your imagination, and when you imagine they are gone, they *are* gone."

He waved his arm imperiously. "Cease, woman, cease!" he cried in burlesque tones. "I refuse to allow you to speak slightingly of yourself. I insist, you're the most satisfactory person this side of immortality. Haven't you any faults at all?"

"I *told* you it was your imagination. Of course, I have lots of them. Otherwise I couldn't be even a little satisfactory."

"No," he replied, shaking his head obstinately. "I have made a careful search, thinking to overcome this feeling of standing on holy ground when with you; but I haven't discovered the slightest possible trace of the smallest possible fault in you."

"You're in bad form to-day, aren't you? That ponderous compliment proves its own insincerity."

He folded his arms contentedly. "By the way, when are you going to let me propose?"

"Must I ever let you?"

"It is inevitable that I shall propose sooner or later, whether you consent or not. But I prefer to do it under the most propitious circumstances."

"Why propose at all?" she argued, smiling. "I like you. We are good friends. Why risk our friendship by introducing uncertainties into it?"

"There is no uncertainty in my love for you."

"How do you know? How can you be sure that you love me and will love me a year hence?"

"How can I be sure! When every atom of my being thrills—"

"Please leave out the rhetoric," she interrupted. "They say you can judge of love by the sacrifices it is willing to make. What would you give up for me?"

"What would I give up? Everything."

"'Everything' is a big word, my friend," she answered skeptically. "Let's come down to facts, as Henry would say. Friends?"

The descendant of the renegade Jewess covered his face with his hands.

She pressed him almost fiercely. "Friends? Even your friend McAdoo?"

"For God's sake, don't!"

"What!" she said mockingly. "Then 'everything' doesn't mean everything?"

Slowly his hands fell to his side. His face was very white, his eyes unutterably weary. His head went up as he answered her steadily, though with visible effort.

"No, 'everything' doesn't mean everything. When he asked me to give you up, I refused. If you should demand that I give him up, I must make the same answer. Otherwise I must be utterly contemptible.

I forced my friendship on him against his will. If it means anything to him now, I can't take it away from him."

He closed his eyes for a moment, and so did not see the kindliness that flashed momentarily into her face.

"Ah! you are worth while now!" she cried inwardly. "If only you could be so always! I almost—*almost*—believe I could love you."

"My dear friend!" she said aloud gently, "I'm not tempting you, because I have nothing to offer in exchange for the sacrifice. I'm only showing you what it means to care for an intensely selfish woman. And I—I should like to care for you. But I *dare* not. I'm too much like Mr. McAdoo. I can never let myself love any man with whom I am not first. And he hates me. It dates from a day eleven years ago, when he saved my life." Paul looked up, astounded. "He has hated the memory of me ever since, I think. If I married you, sooner or later we should come to the place where you must hurt him or me. That would mean misery for us both. I can never think seriously of caring for you until he withdraws his objections to me—or until you are willing to give him up for me."

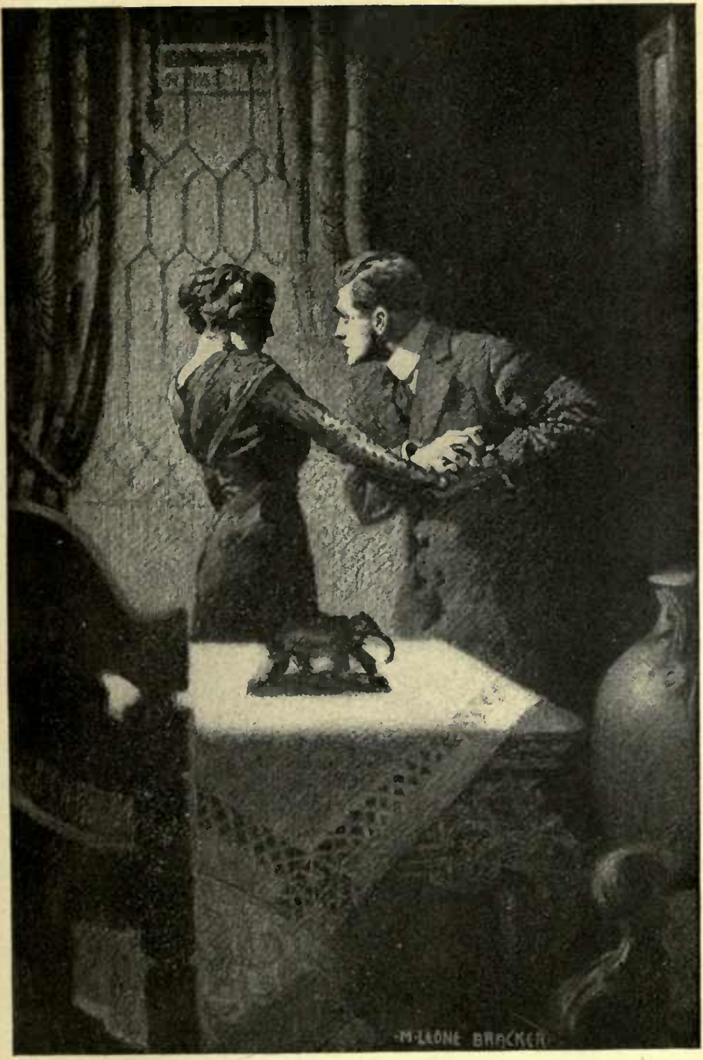
He made no answer. She went close to him and laid a hand gently on his arm.

"Don't you see?"

He caught her hand closely in both of his. "Do you think," he demanded fiercely, "do you think you could ever come to care for me?"

"I wish you could make me," impulsively.

"Then," he said with sudden determination, "when you do, we will teach him what a wonderful woman you are, and he will approve."


M·LEONE BRACKER

"And that would be the only way it could be, I think. For you could never cast him aside—and I could never ask you to—never let you."

She withdrew her hand gently from his ardent clasp.

"And now," she said brightly, with an air of dismissing the topic, "did you know that you are to dine with Henry and me to-night? And afterward you are to take me to church. The preacher is very dull, but at least listening to him will serve as a sort of penance for our sins."

The dinner passed off very pleasantly for Paul. The *chef,* as Sanger boasted, was "really the one exponent of the fine art in the Steel City." And Sanger himself proved to be an admirable host, bearing himself toward Paul with a frank cordiality that made Eleanor secretly to wonder, and quite disarmed Paul. By the time the *entrée* was reached, the talk had turned to politics, Sanger wittily chaffing Paul over the latter's reputation as a "friend of the pee-pul," Paul retorting in kind. When coffee was served, the two men were deep in a political argument, in which Sanger proved a worthy antagonist, drawing on his wide knowledge of industrial and commercial conditions to weave sophistries that more than once discomfited the forensic Paul. Eleanor, taking no part other than to ask an occasional question, listened with the deepest interest.

As the men lighted their cigars, she rose regretfully.

"If we are to do penance by listening to Doctor Maitland, I must get ready. I give you men just fifteen minutes in which to save the nation."

"If I can convert this defendant of the vested interests, I shall believe the nation's ultimate salvation possible," Paul laughed.

"And if I can convert this socialistic friend of the people," Sanger retorted, "I'll have hopes, at least, that the threatened political chaos may be averted for a time."

"I leave Thomas to keep the peace," she smiled, and withdrew.

"Thomas," Sanger suggested, "Mr. Remington's glass needs attention." The needed attention was given. "And now you may leave us, Thomas."

"Quite seriously, Remington," he began. And then, very adroitly, for the second time he took Paul up into a high mountain and showed unto him all the kingdoms of the earth. These he intimated might become Paul's, if only the latter would help him, Sanger, to drive the mulish, hot-headed foes of industrial progress into utter and unending oblivion. Paul laughingly declined the honor. In the exalted mood following his conversation with Eleanor, to resist temptation was easy.

"It comes too high," he laughed. "I've got to stick to McAdoo."

"Bring him along, by all means. He would be a welcome addition to our goodly company. I've mentioned the matter to him myself, but he refused owing to an unfortunate misapprehension of my motives. Perhaps he might be persuaded to reconsider his refusal?"

Paul shook his head. "You don't know McAdoo. He's under pledges in this campaign."

"O, but platforms, my dear Remington, you know—!" Sanger protested humorously.

"He has made personal promises this time, though. One of them is to show no quarter to your people. I never yet heard that he made a promise to break it."

Sanger frowned. "What's his game? You and I know that he, at least, is no friend of the people."

Paul smiled. "To be a friend of the people is good capital sometimes, you know," he answered, remembering Bob's predictions of a popular uprising.

"Your friend may find that he has overcapitalized it," Sanger said sententiously. With a wave of his hand he dismissed the subject in its personal bearing and began an eloquent disquisition on the abstract rights of property owners, which lasted until—

"Henry," came an admonishing voice from the doorway, where Eleanor stood smiling, "if you're not careful, you'll spill that wine down your sleeve. I shouldn't care to hear your comments on that catastrophe. Mr. Remington, what *is* it in politics that makes men so interested? Here is Henry, the sedate, waving a wine-glass frantically in the air and waxing positively eloquent over our industrial prosperity!"

"What I'd like to know," said Paul, rising from the table, "is whether Mr. Sanger believes what he says."

"Of course not," she laughed. "That's merely Henry's method of justifying an intended course of action."

Sanger's eyes narrowed a trifle, but he laughed and answered in the heartiest manner.

"At least, Mr. Remington may be sure that I'm sincere in my good wishes for him personally. If ever I can do anything for you in a private way, don't fail to let me know, Remington."

"I shall remember your promise," Paul said politely, inwardly resolving that, to be on the safe side, he would never allow himself to incur obligations to Sanger.

The preacher proved to be as dull as Eleanor had predicted. For a few minutes Paul dutifully tried to fix his attention on the discourse, but he soon gave over the effort and fell to watching her. He noticed her looking queerly toward a retired corner in one of the galleries. He followed the line of her gaze, and gasped in astonishment.

"Ye gods! Kathleen has brought Bob to church!"

"Is Miss Flinn with him?" she whispered. "Which one?"

"To his right. I'll let you into a secret. Kathleen is in love with Bob."

"Indeed!" she said indifferently.

But several times during the service she caught her gaze straying from the pulpit to the man in the gallery and the sweet-faced woman beside him.

As he was leaving her, Eleanor said:

"Will you take me to call on Miss Flinn?"

"Gladly. I'm sure you and she will become good friends."

For the next few days Paul saw Eleanor daily. She was very kind to him and he was therefore lifted into the seventh heaven. The generosity of the hopeful lover led him to throw himself more enthusiastically into Bob's campaign. But Bob was very busy and there was little opportunity for anything but business conversation; Eleanor Gilbert's name was never mentioned between them. Nevertheless, Bob was not so busy but that she was often in his thoughts. It was at this time that he finally decided on a plan which had been suggested to him by Sanger's visit. This decision led to several long-distance telephone calls between him and Dunmeade and Murchell.

Paul took Eleanor to call on Kathleen early in the week. His prophecy that they would become good friends was not fulfilled, at least immediately. Kathleen, with a self-consciousness foreign to her, saw in Eleanor's honest efforts to please her only patronage. And Eleanor, chilled, was convinced that the older woman disliked her. Kathleen returned the call a few days later, but at that time Eleanor had left the city to spend the week-end with her cousin, Mrs. Dunmeade.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FORCE

"THE time will come when you will be forced to join with us," Mrs. Dunmeade had once predicted to Bob. And the prediction had come true.

But not alone because of the exigencies of his political situation. If it had been a question of political strategy, I doubt that he would ever have gone to Dunmeade or Murchell. Even Mrs. Dunmeade, keenly as she had analyzed him, did not realize the daring and sweep of his ambition. Left to his original plan of campaign, he would have waited until the governor's political necessities compelled the latter to make the overtures; then the alliance would have been effected on terms bound to insure Bob's ultimate mastery. Just what sort of history would have been written under Bob's bossship, as he first dreamed it, we need not surmise. For another factor had entered into his calculations—Eleanor Gilbert.

As the days went by and the change in Paul—attributable to but one cause—became more and more manifest, and his own resentment against her influence over the younger man bit deeper, Bob abandoned the crude, callow reasoning with which he had defended his opposition to her. He admitted frankly to himself that his opposition sprang from his jealous love of Paul and his strong dislike of her—he so called it. For the life of him he could not decide which was the stronger motive. Also he bowed to her taunt that he had no weapons to match hers. Nevertheless it was not in him to yield, and he resolved to sacrifice a part of his ambition that he might offer a chromo with his pound of tea.

"Some day I'm thinkin' ye'll love somebody—*hard*. Thin God pity ye!" Patrick Flinn had prophesied.

Therefore, with little joy in his heart, he went to the capital for his interview with Dunmeade and Murchell.

Twenty-four hours in the governor's mansion made Eleanor regret her visit. The beautiful sympathy and simplicity of the Dunmeade household, by its very contrast recalling her own unhappy marriage, made her life seem unutterably empty. The afternoon of her second day at the capital she had gone to Mrs. Dunmeade's sitting-room and had surprised the governor there. He had stolen away from his office for a few minutes, and was romping with the children, while his wife looked smilingly on.

Eleanor, unnoticed and feeling her presence in the pretty little family group a profanation, tiptoed back to her room, where she brooded disconsolately on her loneliness. Not until the governor's footsteps sounded along the hallway did she venture to return to Mrs. Dunmeade. The youngest child, a little boy just learning to walk, was rubbing his eyes sleepily, and Eleanor, taking him into her arms, crooned a slumber song to him, while Mrs. Dunmeade sewed.

"I always make the little ones' clothes myself," Mrs. Dunmeade explained.

Eleanor nodded understandingly. "I know. I would myself, if I had babies of my own. And I wouldn't leave them to a nurse." She held the little sleeper closer. "I understand now how you could leave your beautiful home and all your old friends to come here."

"It was a little hard at first," Mrs. Dunmeade said softly, so as not to disturb the baby's slumber, "but I soon got over that. We've been here six years now and I'll hate to leave it. I've had John and the children, and our old friends, the best of them at least, visit us often. Occasionally, too, we meet very interesting people. By the way, we are to have one such for dinner this evening."

"A personage?"

"I think we may call him that," Mrs. Dunmeade smiled. "One of your city's politicians, Robert McAdoo."

Eleanor almost dropped the child in her astonishment. "Robert McAdoo!"

"You know him, then?" Mrs. Dunmeade's question convicted her of duplicity, since Paul Remington had written her, confiding to her a little of his trouble.

The child stirred uneasily, and Eleanor hummed a few bars of the slumber song before she answered.

"Yes. I've met him three times in my life. And he hates me."

"He hates you? Why?"

Eleanor laughed shortly. "He thinks I'm in love with Paul Remington and am trying to break his—Mr. McAdoo's, I mean—influence over him."

"Well, are you?"

"Which?"

"In love?"

If the question had come from any one else or at another time, Eleanor would probably have laughed it off. But she was in a mood for confidences. She shrugged her shoulders.

"I'd like to be."

"And the other?"

Eleanor nodded vindictively. "I'd like that, too. He's so sure of himself and so arrogant. He stirs all the wickedness in me—there's a lot of it—to life. I'd like to hurt him. Or, at least, I'd like to prove that I could if I chose. *Isn't* that childish?"

Mrs. Dunmeade shook her head gravely. "My dear, never tempt a man you love to a dishonorable act, even though you hate another."

"But I'm not sure I love the one—in fact, I'm almost sure I don't—and I really dislike the other."

"Then why do it?"

"Sheer deviltry, I suppose. It's all his fault," she added, almost petulantly. "If only he would behave as a normal man and withdraw his gratuitous enmity, I should be willing to leave him in peace. I confess my vanity."

"Then by being normal you mean succumbing to your charms like other men? But, my dear, Mr. McAdoo isn't a normal man. Which is proved by the fact that he, an ex-mill-hand, receives so much thought from a woman who, I remember, as a girl judged all men by the standards of gentility," Mrs. Dunmeade smiled into her sewing.

Eleanor winced. "I've been effectually cured of my snobbery," she laughed contemptuously. "No American who has ever lived abroad, and especially we *nouveaux riches* trying to break into society, can comfortably hold to his reverence for breeding and pedigree."

"Still, Robert McAdoo leaves much to be desired," Mrs. Dunmeade demurred.

Eleanor assumed a carefully judicial air. "Perhaps. Yet one feels that possibly down under the iron of his exterior he has a finer side—if one only had the patience to dig for it. His friendship for Paul Remington proves that he is capable of the finer things, don't you think?"

"Well, perhaps," Mrs. Dunmeade agreed with apparent reluctance.

"O, undoubtedly!" Eleanor insisted positively. Again Mrs. Dunmeade smiled into her sewing.

"But we shouldn't expect too much of a man who had his start in life," she suggested. "You know—" And Mrs. Dunmeade proceeded to give Eleanor the intimate account of Bob's childhood, which she had received from Paul, and which Paul had had from the Flinns. The story lost nothing from Mrs. Dunmeade's telling.

"I never heard that before," Eleanor said thoughtfully, but made no further comment.

"I often think that what he needs is to find some good, strong woman who can persuade him to fall in love with her. Kathleen Flinn, for example."

"Surely not Miss Flinn!" Eleanor exclaimed with a resumption of the judicial manner. "I've met her, and I'm sure she wouldn't be suitable. She strikes me as a very spiritless and commonplace woman."

"You have met her often, then?" Mrs. Dunmeade queried with a smile.

"Dear, don't be ironical. You see," Eleanor explained with what was a convincing air—to herself, at least, "I'm trying to justify my hostility to him. I'd hate to take even a hostile interest in a man who could fall in love with Miss Flinn. I don't like her."

"O, is that it?"

Many another woman would have lectured Eleanor on the dangers of mischief-making. But Mrs. Dunmeade refrained. There are, so scientists assure us, certain tests by which the presence of all physical, mental and psychic conditions may be determined. And that afternoon she reached a conclusion which I do not set down here, because you would deem it preposterous.

Later in the afternoon the governor came in, accompanied by Murchell, who had left the municipal campaign in Adelphia to be at the conference with Robert McAdoo. Eleanor once more marveled at the spirit of the Dunmeade household when she saw the quiet but unconcealed love with which the great politician was received into their little circle. She did not know that the most reviled and feared politician of his generation, personally directing the hottest fight of his career, though mortal illness had seized upon his worn-out body, was making his last atonement for twenty years of misused power. Part of Murchell's atonement was that his good works would never be recognized, while his evil deeds would be remembered for decades. Yet there was that in the man which commanded from Eleanor a profound respect such as she had never given any man, even her uncle or Dunmeade, and she made an effort to win his good opinion. And the old man took her into his heart at once.

Dusk had fallen when the little group broke up to dress for dinner. Mrs. Dunmeade went with Eleanor to the latter's room.

"How pretty may we look to-night?" Eleanor asked smilingly.

"Our very prettiest," Mrs. Dunmeade smiled back.

"But won't Mr. McAdoo—"

Mrs. Dunmeade interrupted laughingly. "My dear, you don't know the American man. If you've never seen Robert McAdoo in the evening, I promise you a surprise. You'll forget the mill-hand and tough politician."

"Then he *is* a tough politician?"

"Judge for yourself to-night." And Mrs. Dunmeade, with a twinkle in her eyes, left Eleanor alone. The latter proceeded to make a very careful toilet.

When she descended to the library, she found Murchell there alone. He greeted her with a courtly bow.

"Will you allow an old man to say that you are a very beautiful young lady, Mrs. Gilbert?"

She dropped him a courtesy. "I assure you, I'm not half so good as I'm good to look at."

"But I expect you to be. You mustn't disappoint me."

She shook her head, laughing, and promptly changed the subject.

"Who are these dignified gentlemen looking down on us? Governors?"

"Yes. This is—" And beginning with the portrait of the state's first governor, a distinguished revolutionary soldier and statesman, he guided Eleanor around the room, telling her briefly what each man had done or failed to do. It was not always an honorable tale. The last, hung in an obscure corner, was Dunmeade's, painted and hung during his first term. Eleanor studied it in silence for a few moments.

"He's a good man, isn't he?" she asked at last.

Murchell answered with deep feeling. "The best I know—and the most misunderstood."

She turned abruptly to face him. "Will you tell me what it is in this household that I have never known elsewhere? There's something here that makes me feel so miserably small and mean."

"Love and sacrifice," Murchell answered quietly.

"Love of self and sacrifice of others are the love and sacrifice I have most often met with, Mr. Murchell. And such people seem to get the most out of life," she said bitterly.

"When you are as old as I am," he said gravely, "you will realize that love of others is the richest thing in the world, and sacrifice for others the highest, and that in both we find the truest happiness. That sounds like trite preaching. But few of us realize how true it is—until it is too late."

"Not many of us are made of the stuff to reach such heights."

"Only great souls are capable of great love or great sacrifice." And he added thoughtfully: "Such as the man we are waiting for. If he could only learn the lesson John Dunmeade and his wife have learned, he would be one of the greatest men of our day."

She started. "Surely not Robert McAdoo! I thought he was merely a type of our corrupt city politicians, a little more able than most of them, but no better."

He looked at her intently. "I fear you have been listening to false prophets, young lady."

"At any rate, the seed of your gospel will hardly find fertile soil in him."

But before Murchell could answer, the governor and his wife entered.

"Is it a secret?" the latter asked gaily. Mrs. Dunmeade was very happy that evening.

"Mr. Murchell has been telling me about our governors," Eleanor answered, concealing her disappointment over the interruption. "I wonder whose picture will be hung here next?"

She saw a quick, meaning glance pass between Murchell and the governor's wife. But for answer Mrs. Dunmeade merely laughed and said evasively, "O, one never knows what a day may bring forth in politics."

With a pang Eleanor remembered that every time she had asked a question, the answer to which involved a hint of the reformers' plans, Mrs. Dunmeade had made a similar reply.

"They treat me as though I were a stupid child," she thought resentfully, "or an enemy, incapable of sympathy with them." And she allowed Mrs. Dunmeade to steer the conversation into other channels.

They were still chatting before the governor's portrait when the tinkle of the door-bell was heard. Eleanor, with amused expectancy, stepped back into the corner where she could not be seen by Bob at once.

He entered and Eleanor, warned as she had been by Mrs. Dunmeade, could hardly repress a start of surprise. It was not altogether the change in appearance wrought by his formal attire—nowadays Bob was always careful in the matter of dress, for the same reason that he kept his body in magnificent trim by regular exercise—even more was it his manner as he received the greetings of his hosts and Murchell. There was here indeed no hint of the uncouth mill-hand or of the arrogant but keenly alert boss who had dominated the convention, or yet of the militant caller who had gone to her to order her out of his friend's life and his own as well. His manner, as he met their cordial welcome, was neither repelling nor eager, but rather the quiet dignity of a man who was sure of his footing. Eleanor found herself rejoicing that she had not attempted to patronize him during his call.

"I believe you have met Mrs. Gilbert," Mrs. Dunmeade said, when the first greetings were over.

Bob whirled sharply. As he faced her, the blood rushed to his cheek and his eyes glinted in angry surprise. In an instant, however, all trace of feeling had passed and, bowing slightly, he answered with perfect composure.

"Twice, I believe. I hardly expected to meet you here, Mrs. Gilbert."

"Three times, I'm sure," she said pleasantly. "It's very stupid, but really all I can think of is that trite old saying that the world is very small, Mr. McAdoo."

Bob's sense of humor came to his aid, as he looked at the woman to cast whom and her influence out of his life and plans he had come to find a weapon. He laughed.

"I should say that the world's size depends upon whether you are trying to find or avoid a person."

Her face lighted up mirthfully. "Come, Mr. McAdoo. We are under the white flag here. I appeal to the governor. Cousin, to my rescue, for the sake of your household's peace. Mr. McAdoo and I always quarrel."

"Then I solemnly declare a truce," laughed the governor. "But I doubt her need of my protection. I fancy this young lady is quite capable of caring for herself, eh, Mr. McAdoo?"

"Quite!"

"That's very generous," she smiled. "It speaks well for a successful truce, I hope?" And she held out her hand with pretended hesitation.

His hesitation was genuine, but, yielding to the necessity, he took her slender, white hand into his big, strong one—the hand, as it flashed across her mind, that had once snatched her from a hideous death. Perhaps her smile became more kindly than she intended, for he dropped her hand as though it had been a hot coal.

"And now," Mrs. Dunmeade said promptly, "peace having been established all around, let us go in to dinner." She took Bob's arm and led the way into the dining-room.

At dinner Bob sat opposite Eleanor, to his considerable discomfort at first. He may have possessed, as Mrs. Dunmeade had said, the American trait of adaptability, but to sit in the friendly intimacy of a dinner table, facing a woman to whom he felt extremely unfriendly, was an experience to which he found it difficult to reconcile himself. Perhaps Mrs. Dunmeade saw this, for she guided the talk to subjects which allowed him to be the audience. And after a while his discomfort was forgotten in his interest in the conversation and in his covert study of Eleanor. Especially in his study of Eleanor. He watched her critically, that he might learn, if possible, the secret of her influence over Paul. His study forced him to admit, very grudgingly, that any man might find it hard to resist her charm.

"Any man of Paul's temperament, that is," he corrected himself hastily. And he began to doubt the success of his mission to the capital in its ultimate purpose.

Finally Mrs. Dunmeade turned to Bob. "Tell us, how is your campaign progressing?"

"There is considerable opposition."

"If your friends' good wishes count for anything," she said kindly, "you will win. We're all anxious to see you elected."

Bob looked at her in genuine surprise. There was no doubting the sincerity of her words; nor was her interest to be attributed solely to her husband's ambitions. Also he was surprised to feel a faint stirring of gratitude for her friendliness.

"Thank you," he said simply.

"You will win," Murchell put in confidently.

"I expect to," Bob replied with equal confidence.

"One good indication," Murchell added, "is the viciousness of their newspaper attacks. They overstep all bounds. That court-house story, for instance. I personally know that you had nothing to do with it."

"No. I had nothing to do with it."

"If necessary," Murchell volunteered. "I'll be glad to give an interview to that effect."

"What's the use? The people who believe the story won't believe my denial, or yours either for that matter."

"But I should think," said Eleanor, who had read the libel in question—and believed it—addressing Bob for the first time since they had sat down, "that such stories would hurt your reputation and therefore your chance of winning."

"As a politician, I consider a clean reputation a valuable asset."

"Don't you think silence often has the effect of confession? Surely people aren't so unreasonable as to refuse to weigh a denial?"

Bob laughed unaffectedly. "They wouldn't have the chance. The newspapers that published the story wouldn't publish my denial. And we Americans read only one newspaper—the one that takes our side."

"But," she insisted warmly, "such things are unfair. Aren't there any laws regulating newspapers?"

Bob laughed again. "Very few. The freedom of the press must be preserved."

"But freedom doesn't mean license."

"To the partizan press it does."

"Surely there must be some way to stop such stories?"

"What business is it of yours?" Bob wanted to say roughly. Instead he said grimly: "Yes. Bribe the owners."

"Who are the owners of the paper that published the court-house story?" she asked, not seeing or not understanding the danger signals flashed across to her by Mrs. Dunmeade.

Bob was tempted. To tell her the truth, to shame and hurt her before her friends—it would have been an incense of sweet savor to his hostility. But he caught Mrs. Dunmeade's pleading look.

"The opposition," he said carelessly. He was repaid by a grateful look from his hostess.

"However," the governor put in hastily, "in your campaign the newspapers don't count for so much as usual, if I may judge from a distance. The people of your city lately have been doing their own thinking. You're to be congratulated, Mr. McAdoo, on having an aroused people with you."

"You're to be congratulated on having aroused your people," Murchell corrected.

"Yes," Mrs. Dunmeade said. "Because it is their interest in your fight that has made your people think for themselves."

"How do you arouse a people, Mr. McAdoo?" Eleanor inquired quizzically.

"Denounce the other side," he said shortly.

"Then in politics one depends for success on the faults of the other side, rather than on one's own virtues?"

"Precisely."

"No, no," the governor protested kindly. "Mr. McAdoo isn't just to himself. The truth is, while he has been at the head of the Steel City organization—"

"Is that a polite name for boss?" Eleanor interrupted.

"I'm afraid it is," the governor returned pleasantly. "I was going to say that under Mr. McAdoo's leadership the district attorney's office in your county has been most efficiently and honestly conducted, and the present city administration is the cleanest, most economical the city has ever known."

"Why, that almost makes you a friend of the people," Eleanor said, looking across at Bob. He knew that she was thinking of their conversation the day he had called on her, and he stiffened.

"No," he replied coldly. "It only proves I'm not fool enough to ask the public to support me for nothing."

"O, I see," she said with an air extremely irritating to Bob, who began to find the restraint of his position very irksome. "You offer them the other side's faults and lower taxes by way of a bribe. So they make you boss."

"You don't know much about politics, Mrs. Gilbert," he said with a touch of his customary curtness. "There's no such thing as a boss of the people. A man may boss a government because of personal hold on the officers, but he can't call himself boss of a people who can throw him aside whenever they please."

"Then what is the secret of your success?" she persisted. "Why are you so sure of being elected? As you say, I'm very ignorant of politics."

"Because I play the better game."

Suddenly Murchell, who had taken little part in the conversation, leaned forward and leveled an accusing finger at Bob.

"That's not true," he said sternly. "It's false to the people of your city and to yourself. You're the shrewdest and boldest politician in this state. But your knowledge of the game alone would never make you mayor of your city. Nor will it be due to the fact that you are a boss with an ironclad machine at your back. You're more than a boss. You have made yourself the leader of the people in their fight against the

Railroad-Steel trust. Therefore you will win. Not the master politician or the boss of a machine will be elected, but Robert McAdoo, leader of the people. The responsibility will be yours, but it will not be your victory, but the victory of the cause you represent, the victory of the Force."

"The Force?" Bob and Eleanor exclaimed together.

Murchell's hand dropped to the table. His lean, haggard face showed a red spot in each cheek. "Yes, the great Social Force in whose grip we all are. The Force that, working in all of us from the first man down, has made us dependent on one another for happiness, for life—brethren, children of one Father. The Force that makes the man, the social unit, find his happiness, his welfare, in the happiness and welfare of his brethren, of society. The Force that has given John Dunmeade strength to struggle, libeled and misunderstood, against those who defy this principle of the universe. The Force that has placed in you—forgive my bluntness—the crassest egoist I have ever known, the spirit to defy and fight the same enemy of your brethren. The Force that makes you and John Dunmeade, by grace of a common enemy, necessary to each other, and makes you both necessary to the people of this state. The Force that will give you the victory."

The old politician stopped, his black eyes gleaming fiercely at Bob through the shaggy eyebrows. Of what was going on within him, Bob's masklike expression gave no hint as he met Murchell's gaze impassively. He shifted his glance to the others and found that he, not Murchell, was the target for their eyes. Upon Dunmeade's gentle face was written the exaltation of the martyr who sees into the beyond and beholds his triumph; upon his wife's countenance both triumph and understanding. Eleanor was looking at him with an expression Bob could not understand, though he knew that, for once, it was not hostile. He turned again to Murchell, an ugly glitter in his eyes.

"Do you add, the Force that led you, the first of the school of corporation politicians, to create the very conditions we are fighting?"

Murchell did not flinch. "No, I have been of those who abused power, and therefore I have been the greatest criminal of my day. I add, the Force that will lead you two to repair the damage I have done."

Bob's mouth twisted into his sardonic grin. "It's a hopeless theory, Mr. Murchell. You make us all blind automatons. You take away from me—the crassest egoist you have ever known—my individuality, my reason for existence, my Self. And you give me in exchange—a species of sublimated socialism."

"Yes," Murchell said quietly, "the socialism of Christ when He commanded 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"Your Force is as inexorable as God!"

"The Force is God," Murchell answered quietly.

"Yes," Mrs. Dunmeade said gently. "For God is Love."

Bob turned to her and the sneer faded from his mouth. "What does the Force give us in exchange for our selfishness? What have I, reduced to an atomaton, to make life and action worth while?"

"The happiness of seeing your fellows happier," she replied. "And Love."

He broke into a rasping, mirthless laugh. "Pardon me," he said, recovering himself. "I'm not laughing at you or your Force, but at a joke I had forgotten. I was introduced to your Force two months ago."

"No, my friend," Murchell said; "at your birth."

CHAPTER XV

THE ALLIANCE

WHEN the men were alone, Bob proceeded to explain his visit.

"Now that we have reached a verdict convicting me of conspiring to uplift humanity," he began, "let's get down to business, if you're ready to hear me."

"We are ready."

"The other day," Bob went on, "I had an interview with Henry Sanger, Jr. The interview was at his request. He is backing Larkin. Larkin doesn't know it, but there's no doubt about it. Sanger was very frank. He informed me that he and his 'fellow investors' intend to break with you openly and finally and to select the next governor, legislature and senator. This probably isn't news to you?"

"No, it isn't news," Murchell said.

"He was very frank, because he believes they'll have no trouble beating you."

"That remains to be seen."

"He came to propose that I join with them. He held out big inducements. He offered to contribute to my campaign fund, also to place the next governorship under my control and to put me at the head of the new state organization. Subject to certain limitations, of course."

Murchell smiled knowingly. "Sanger must be very hopeless of beating you."

"That's what I told him," Bob laughed.

"What did you answer?" the governor put in eagerly.

"I refused."

"Why?" Murchell demanded sharply.

"*Not* because I am a votary of your Social Force, but because I am the crassest egoist you have ever known," Bob said grimly.

"Never mind your motives just now," Dunmeade said impatiently. "Go on."

"I further told him that I proposed to line up with you." Bob paused, looking at the others inquiringly.

"I suppose you didn't leave your campaign merely to tell us this?" Murchell said.

"No. As I told Sanger, I choose to join you people. But, of course, my doing so depends upon certain conditions." He paused again. "As I suggested over the 'phone."

"And your conditions?"

"I must name the next candidate for governor," Bob said coolly.

"That," Murchell said decidedly, "we can't consent to, unless your candidate meets with our approval. Have you some one in particular in mind?"

"Yes. Remington."

"Paul Remington!" Dunmeade exclaimed. "I had suspected—" He paused.

"His ambition must fly high," Murchell said, looking at Bob in surprise.

"No. He knows nothing of the object of this visit.

I don't suppose he has even thought of himself in connection with the next governorship."

"Nor am I prepared for the suggestion," Murchell said thoughtfully. "There are several things to consider. First, can he be elected?"

"He stands as good a chance as any one we could pick. He's the most popular man in the Steel City. He has a clean personal record. He's well and favorably known over the state. He has spoken in every county. He's a good campaigner. And his youth is in his favor."

"Then, can we *trust* him?" Murchell demanded, looking at Bob keenly.

"Yes," Bob answered firmly, almost too firmly, Murchell thought.

"Well," Murchell said slowly, "you may be right. But, frankly, while I like and admire Remington, I haven't absolute confidence in him. He's brilliant and enthusiastic, but he lacks stability of character, and I doubt if he really has a high conception of political responsibility. The next governor will have need of these qualities. As the present governor has had need of them." He laid his hand kindly on Dunmeade's arm.

"But this isn't a matter for hasty decision," he continued. "Is there any reason why we should give an immediate answer?"

"Yes. For private reasons which I don't care to discuss, the matter must be settled before I return home to-night."

Murchell looked at Bob thoughtfully before he answered. "What guaranty have we that he will play fair with us?"

"If we choose him, I'll be back of him," Bob said, meeting Murchell's glance steadily. "And—I know him better than you do—if I think there ever is or can be the least doubt as to his good faith or nerve, I will withdraw my request."

"And what guaranty have we that *you* will play fair?"

Bob smiled grimly. "Isn't the guaranty of your Force sufficient?"

"You profess not to be a disciple."

"You have my word. I guess you'll have to depend on that," Bob said quietly.

Murchell turned to the governor. "What do you say, John? It is your concern more than mine. In all probability you'll be fighting alone then."

"I pray not," Dunmeade said gently. He leaned forward and looked at Bob intently. "You realize what this means? Open fight against the railroad, the Steel Trust and the Standard Oil, with no compromise."

"Governor Dunmeade," Bob answered harshly, "they have seen fit to make war on me. We'll keep it up until they are finished—or I am."

"That isn't the highest or most trustworthy motive, my friend," Murchell said in reproof.

"It's the best I pretend to," Bob answered curtly.

The governor reached his hand across the table to Bob. "Your word is good enough for me."

For an hour they discussed the matter in detail, Bob remaining very firm in his demand. At last Murchell's consent was won.

"Then it's settled," he said. "Let us hope we never regret it."

"You will never regret it, Mr. Murchell," Bob replied earnestly. "If I should change my mind about Remington, I'll support whomever you choose."

"Do you really believe there is any chance of your changing your mind?"

"I hope not," Bob answered quickly. "In the meantime, gentlemen, be so kind as to keep this quiet for the present. I prefer that Remington shouldn't hear of it at once."

"You have no objections to my wife knowing, I hope," said Dunmeade. "I have no secrets from her, you know."

"No. But please see to it that Mrs. Gilbert knows nothing about it. *Especially* Mrs. Gilbert," Bob added emphatically.

Dunmeade looked at Bob curiously, but asked no questions. "Certainly your wishes shall be respected," he said courteously.

He rose from the table. "This being settled, shall we go into the library? You both have some time before your trains are due."

To this proposal Bob demurred. He would have preferred to go to his hotel to wait until train time, thus avoiding another meeting with Eleanor. But the governor insisted.

"I won't take 'no.' My wife will be very much disappointed, if you run away. Especially now," he added gently. And Bob reluctantly accompanied the others into the library.

As they walked through the hallway, they heard shouts of childish merriment. At the door of the library they halted to watch a pretty little group, Eleanor sitting on the floor romping with the three children—considerably to the disarrangement of hair and gown—while Mrs. Dunmeade and a maid looked laughingly on.

Murchell nudged Bob. "One of the things we bachelors miss, eh, McAdoo?"

The entrance of the men broke up the merry group, the two older children running to their father and climbing into his arms. Eleanor, flushing slightly, hurriedly rose to her feet, holding the baby. Now a beautiful woman never appeals so strongly to a man as when she has a little child in her arms.

"Come, you children," Mrs. Dunmeade commanded with mock severity, "to bed with you. These youngsters, Mr. McAdoo, have the run of the house, you see."

But before the child was turned over to the waiting maid, Eleanor, conscious—shall we confess it?—of the charming picture she made, must take him to his father to receive the good-night salute. Next, Murchell must pay his homage. Then she looked, hesitating, toward Bob, who stood in the background. As he read her intent in her audacious smile, he felt the blood rise uncomfortably to his face.

"Come," she declared gaily, "you shan't be neglected, Mr. McAdoo."

She carried the child to Bob and held him up. Bob, with awkward unfamiliarity, extended his big hand toward the mite of humanity. But the little one refused to accept the advances, clinging tightly to Eleanor's neck and regarding the big stranger with frightened eyes.

"Do you know what they say of children's instincts?" she whispered softly, that the others might not hear. Bob flushed even more deeply.

It was a little thing, but it added fuel to the flame of his angry resentment against her.

She gave the child over to the maid. "Children are dears, even if they are hard on one's hair," she laughed, as with the inimitable grace which a woman imparts to the operation she replaced the wisps of hair disordered by the youngsters' irreverent hands.

When the damage had been repaired, Mrs. Dunmeade suggested, "Won't you sing for us?"

"Yes," Eleanor complied without reluctance, real or affected.

And forthwith she seated herself at the piano and sang. Murchell took a chair before the fire and leaned back in comfortable anticipation. The governor and his wife seated themselves near each other where they might whisper together.

Bob, glad enough of any excuse for silence and retirement, chose a seat in a shadowy corner. There had been little music in his hard, busy life, and such singing as he heard that evening in the governor's library was a revelation to him. It gave him a glimpse of a new world, of a side of life in which he had no part. As her voice rose and fell—in some simple song chosen, had he only known it, to fit his own limited comprehension—his eyes fixed their gaze sternly on the singer. His arms were folded across his chest, each hand gripping its fellow's biceps—as he had sat through the convention, when Paul's impassioned voice, appealing to something higher in the audience than the orator himself felt, had found a lodgment where least expected. The easy unconcern with which he had taken his place among these people fell from him. Here in the somber old library, fragrant with memories, in the presence of the gentle-souled Dunmeades; listening to the beautiful, cultured, well-poised woman who was singing—here was no place for him! "Let me get back to my heelers and my fighting, where I belong!" . . .

The song ended, she began another. Mrs. Dunmeade, to whom the governor had whispered the result of the conference, looked eagerly toward Bob, with intent to move her seat beside his. But, seeing his stern regard of Eleanor, she stayed where she was, scrutinizing him covertly.

In his heart Bob was crying in bitter anger to the woman at the piano: "Why did you come into my life? But for you I could soon have been master of this state, alone and undisputed. I, I only, not this Force which these dreamers spin out of their fancy, could have done this! But now, because of you, I have been false to myself. I am free no longer—hampered by a man with ideals, bound by this new-found honor to keep a bargain through which I have sold my independence."

And then, with a smile and a glance for him, she struck into another song:

"We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
  Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

"But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checquer-board of Nights and Days;
  Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays."

"Helpless pieces in the game He plays!" Bitter anger against her boiled up in his heart. "That wasn't true—until you came!" . . .

Murchell rose to leave. First, he held out his hand to Bob.

"No use coming with me. Your train isn't due for two hours yet. My friend, you won't regret to-night. You'll hear from me in a day or two."

To Eleanor he said: "Thank you for your singing. It has done me great good—and to know you, too. I repeat, you are a very beautiful young lady, and as good as you are good to look at, I'm sure. My dear, I'm an old man—" And he bent over to kiss her. A very becoming flush came to her cheek.

"You two can take care of each other for a few minutes, can't you?" Mrs. Dunmeade said to Eleanor and Bob. "We never leave this dear friend until he has passed the door." So Robert McAdoo and Eleanor Gilbert were alone together once more.

When the others had left, she looked at him uncertainly a moment. Then she laughed.

"Well! Fate—or shall we say, the Force?—seems to take an intimate interest in our affairs. The last time we met, we both determined never to see each other again. And now—" She waved her hand in an expressive gesture. "Suppose you come over here by the piano. It's awkward, trying to talk across a big room like this."

He crossed the room and stood by the piano, looking down on her.

"Aren't they the dear, good people?" she said earnestly, "and don't they make you feel mean and small? They always do me, I know. Or," she added with the irritating uplift of her brow, "do you ever feel small and mean?"

"I admit their goodness."

She saw that, for some reason, his temper was slipping its leash. She took a keen delight in her power to anger him. Daringly she tried to torment him further.

"These people, this home, have the strangest effect on me. They make me want to rise above my meanness of spirit. They almost persuade me to be generous. Do you know," she leaned forward on the music-rack, resting her chin on her folded hands and smiling up at him, "I'm almost tempted never to quarrel with you again."

"I don't want peace with you," he cried roughly.

"No," she laughed, "I know you don't. That's one good reason why I should yield to temptation. But I'm not sure that I want to quarrel with you, aside from that. The last twenty-four hours I've learned a good many things. One of them is to revise my opinion of you. What I have heard of you heretofore, you know, has always been biased one way or the other. Mr. Remington's homerics I have always regarded merely as the overloyalty of a zealous friend. But now—when I see how these good people receive you," she concluded her sentence with great deliberation, "I begin to think you're not half so black as you have been painted, Mr. McAdoo."

"I don't want your good opinion. Stick to the old one. I'm all you thought me and more."

"Poor man! You deserve the relief of that outburst. This truce has been hard on you, hasn't it? You've behaved very well. But tell me, will you answer a question honestly—without any consideration of my feelings?"

"I can at least promise not to consider your feelings," he answered grimly, struggling with his anger.

"Then—do you dislike me merely because Mr. Remington cares—or thinks he cares—for me? Or do you really hate me for myself?"

"Mrs. Gilbert, I really hate you for yourself."

"I knew it." Amusement was not written quite so plainly on her face as it had been. "Why?"

"That's the irony of it," he exclaimed bitterly. "When I tell you why, I pay you the best compliment I can give. I hate you because you are beautiful. Because you are witty. Because you have courage. Because you are the only person I have ever met that I'm not a match for. Because you have forced me to change my plans.

"Hate you!" he continued, and though his voice became lower it also grew hotter. "I hated you when I first saw you and saved your life. Mrs. Gilbert, I hate you so thoroughly that I have come to this decision—either Paul Remington gives you up or he gives me up. If he marries you, he goes out of my life once and for all. Now you may gloat," he sneered. "I deserve to have you know the truth. It's my just punishment for not being able to beat a woman."

During his outburst her amusement disappeared altogether. She spoke almost regretfully.

"How you must hate me! I don't understand it. But I don't gloat. I am only sorry for you. What you say almost makes you contemptible. Surely you can't mean that, merely because your petty, childish vanity is hurt, you are willing to sacrifice not only my possible happiness—which, of course, doesn't count—but also the happiness of a man you have called friend. Surely you're not so small and *weak* as that!"

Then his anger slipped its leash entirely. The red veil that had come before his eyes when he fought Haggin fell again. He was obsessed by a savage lust to hurt the woman before him, to deal her a blow that she would feel to the uttermost. His words fell slowly, cuttingly, with cruel distinctness.

"O, for that I have all the justification I need. You're not to be trusted with him. You're beautiful. You're the sort that has power over men. You have power over *me*. . . . Seeing you sets me on fire with wild, insane longings. I *have* to keep my hate boiling . . . or . . . good God! what am I saying? . . . it's true! . . . or *love* you!" He laughed harshly, wildly. "And the weaker the man, the greater your power. I know your history, Mrs. Gilbert. You had one weakling under your influence. And you let him go to hell without lifting a finger to save him."

Even in his savage anger, Bob was startled by the effect of his cruel words. She turned white and shrank back as from a heavy physical blow. Once he had carried an injured newsboy from the street into a doctor's office and had seen the mingled fear and fascination in the child's eyes as he watched the surgeon's movements. Into her eyes he saw the same expression come, as she looked up at him, her woman's pride and courage struck down in an instant. She drew a long, shuddering breath.

"Oh!" she gasped. "I didn't believe you could be so cruel. I didn't believe you could be so cruel."

Slowly, unable to take her eyes from his, she rose and started uncertainly toward the door. She stumbled over a chair and would have fallen, had he not caught her. She pushed herself away from him, shuddering.

"Don't touch me, don't touch me!"

He watched her, hardly able to comprehend the completeness of his brutality's triumph or the startling change in the woman who had mocked him so often, until she passed out of the room. And as she went from his sight, the sweetness of his savage joy turned to bitterness in his mouth—left him to face the supreme fact of his life.

A minute later, mechanically, ashamed and humbled by his own cruelty, he followed her into the hall. But she had gone up-stairs to her room. He went on to the door, whence the governor and Mrs. Dunmeade were returning. It did not require Mrs. Dunmeade's keen eyes to discern that something was wrong.

"Are you leaving so soon?"

"Yes, I must."

She did not seek to detain him, but held out both hands to him.

"I shan't boast of my prescience. But I must say that I'm glad—for your sake as well as ours. I expect great things of you, Robert McAdoo."

He dropped her hands quickly. "You can't expect much from *me*," he answered roughly.

And seizing his hat and coat, without waiting to put them on or to say good-by to Dunmeade, he strode out into the night.

The mansion had been some time sunk in the midnight quiet when Mrs. Dunmeade, troubled by Eleanor's non-appearance, tiptoed softly along the hall to her guest's bedchamber. Through the transom the light still shone.

She rapped softly. "Are you asleep, Eleanor?"

There was a short wait before a tired voice answered, "No."

"May I come in?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Dunmeade opened the door and entered. Eleanor was in bed, her bright hair straying loosely over the pillow. She was staring hopelessly at the flickering gas-jet. Mrs. Dunmeade saw no traces of tears.

She seated herself on the bedside. "My dear," she said gently, leaning over to stroke the pretty hair, "will you tell me what is the matter?"

Eleanor restively moved her head away from the caress. "Don't pet me," she said bitterly. "I'm not a child, but a woman nearly twenty-seven years old, who has just been told she is responsible for the shameful life and death of her husband."

"Oh!" Mrs. Dunmeade cried in shocked surprise, "did he taunt you with that? My dear, don't take it to heart. We all know you were the one sinned against."

"Yes, that was one of my pretty fancies, too," Eleanor said in the same bitter tone. "Until to-night, when he opened my eyes. I have been lying here seeing things as they are. What he said was true. That's why it hurt—I let Leonard Gilbert go to hell and didn't lift a finger to save him. Only," she added wearily, "I would rather have heard it from any one but *him*."

"My poor child!" Mrs. Dunmeade breathed softly, taking Eleanor's hand. "I had hoped his coming would bring nothing but happiness."

"Can he bring happiness to any one?" Eleanor queried wanly.

And wise Mrs. Dunmeade, hoping to draw Eleanor's mind a little from her own trouble, told her the story of John Dunmeade from the very beginning: of the long, lonely struggle, with its defeats and compromises and infinitesimal victories, of the open fight now being waged against him by his enemies, and why. Then she told her of the time when Bob had refused to help the governor, and how for years they had hoped and waited for his conversion; and lastly, ignoring her husband's promise to Bob, of the alliance that had been formed that night, and what it meant to the reformers.

"It is asking a good deal to ask you to forgive him. But, dear, I think he is suffering from some cause. Some day he will be sorry. He is a man who hasn't yet found himself," she concluded gently. "But when he does find himself, he will be a vastly different man, and he will bring happiness to many."

Eleanor shook her head listlessly. "But not to me. He despises me, and he will never relent. But I have no resentment." The slow flush crept into her cheeks and she put her arm over her eyes that Mrs. Dunmeade might not look into them.

Mrs. Dunmeade bent over impulsively and put her arms around her. "My dear child," she whispered understandingly, "has it come to you at last—and so?"

Eleanor suffered the caress for a minute, and then gently released herself. "Won't you please go away? I would rather be by myself," she said wearily.

Mrs. Dunmeade kissed her compassionately and left the room, troubled in heart.

Years before a young girl, bruised under the ruthless heel of Bob McAdoo, had watched the night out. That night in the governor's mansion history repeated itself.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FORCE AT WORK

BOB returned to treat the city to a whirlwind campaign such as it had never known.

As cogs in his machine he had his managers and lieutenants and committees. But from now to the close of the campaign he took upon himself much of their work as well as the ordinary but trying functions of the candidate. No detail of the campaign was too insignificant to receive his attention. He knew to a man who were working for him in every precinct of the great city and what work they were doing. These workers he met in person, giving to the bearer of favorable reports short words of praise that somehow sent him back to his precinct determined to do better still, and to others who had met with greater obstacles a kindly encouragement that stiffened their resolution.

It was Bob's changed manner toward men that amazed Haggin.

"Damned if you ain't gettin' to be a reg'lar mixer," he grinned late one night—or rather early one morning—as Bob and he walked home from headquarters together. "You got Paul skinned now. What's got into you?"

"God knows!" Bob answered with a hard laugh.

"Well, mebby He does," Haggin said philosophically. "What *I* know is, you're goin' to give Mack the all-firedest lickin' *he* ever got."

Could it have been Bob who made the answer? "No, no, Tom! You and I have deluded ourselves with that notion long enough. Not I, but the people, are going to whip MacPherson."

Haggin snorted in profound disgust. "Aw, g'wan! You talk like Paul in his speeches. They're goin' to do it fer *you*. Guess that means you're doin' it."

"Bah! Why should they do it for me?"

Haggin's brow puckered over the problem. "I know, but I dunno how to say it." What Haggin considered a clencher occurred to him. "Well," he asked triumphantly, "if the people's doin' it all, what are you workin' so hard fer, half killin' yourself? Even you can't stand the pace you're settin'."

"You can't understand," Bob growled helplessly. "I've got to."

It was quite true, what Haggin suggested. The strain was telling even on Bob's strength. Unwonted hollows appeared in his cheeks and temples. His deep-set eyes sank deeper still. New lines showed about his mouth. But feverish activity was a necessity to him, to deaden all thought of the thing that haunted him—the thing which, unless he dragged home a body wearied to the point of exhaustion, kept him tossing in bed or pacing the floor sleeplessly—the face of a woman whom he had brutally struck down in his wild anger.

But his work told. The city was in a turmoil of political excitement. The press reveled in the opportunity, bristling with charges and counter-charges, innuendo and recrimination. At the club, over lunchcounters, by the fireside, men—and women, too—discussed and took sides over the campaign. The children on the streets became bitter partizans.

Murchell was as good as his word. Soon after Bob's return to the city he received from the old man a substantial check for the campaign fund. Also certain gentlemen who had hitherto been inactive took a sudden keen interest in Bob's candidacy.

But back of Murchell's help, back of the newspapers, back of the machine, was the dynamic personality of Bob McAdoo. The issues may have been "The people against the trust," "citizenship against wealth," as Bob's press and orators declared, but to the Steel City the issues took concrete form in the person and name of one man, Bob McAdoo. Either you were for or you were against Bob McAdoo; mostly you were for him. When, during the last three weeks of the campaign, he took the stump in person, speaking three or four times every evening, the school-houses were packed to overflowing by friends and enemies alike. He was no orator, but his short, crisp speeches were received with greater attention and enthusiasm than even Paul's fervid oratory or Martin's keen, analytical arguments.

And Henry Sanger, Jr., waxed desperate.

One noonday—not two weeks before the election—Bob found himself alone in the "engine room." He leaned back in his chair with an air of fatigue that sat strangely on his stalwart figure, and let his eyes stare vacantly into space. While he sat thus abstractedly, Paul entered. Bob nodded mechanically.

Paul addressed a remark to him, which did not pierce the abstraction. Bob made no answer. Then

Paul noticed the absent manner. He repeated the remark more loudly. Bob came to himself with a start.

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "O, it's you, Paul."

Paul looked at him curiously. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? I said I've a tip on Consolidated Glass."

"Which way?" Bob asked, without interest.

"To buy."

"All right. Sell."

"No," Paul said eagerly. "This is a good tip. I got it from Brown, Hartley's broker. Hartley, you know, is a director. Next week they're going to declare a four per cent. increase in dividends."

"Humph! The broker who will doublecross his client will do the same to you."

"Not this time. I got it last night at the club. Brown was on one of his periodical sprees. I put him to bed and, as a special favor to me, his 'dear, dearesh fr'en',' he gave me the tip."

Bob grunted again sententiously. "Steer clear of the stock market."

"But you've speculated yourself," Paul retorted.

"That's different."

"I don't see it," Paul answered impatiently. "Anyhow, I'm going into this."

"All right. How much money have you?"

"O, only a measly two or three thousand," Paul answered contemptuously.

"Well, go ahead," Bob said with skeptical indifference. "You can't lose much and the lesson will be cheap at the price."

"But I tell you it's a good tip," and Paul pounded the table in his earnestness, "and I want to raise twenty-five thousand or so for it. I can treble the money in a week."

Bob smiled tolerantly, as though Paul had been a child asking for an expensive but useless toy. "What do you want with so much money?"

"O, I'm serious about this, Bob. Will you lend me the money?"

Bob did not answer at once. In the gray hollows the red-lidded eyes gleamed with a hot, fierce light. "Why not? Why not add one more link to the chain of obligations by which he would break the hold of—" He stirred as one in sudden pain and left the thought unfinished. The hot, fierce gleam slowly faded into a dull stare Paul did not recognize. The noonday sun was streaming in through the shadeless windows, yet Bob was seeing again the face of the stricken woman, as he had sleeplessly looked upon it through the small hours of that morning, accusing, fearing, appealing. To his thin face, ugly in its gauntness, surged the slow, painful red. When he spoke, Paul hardly knew the voice, so constrained and querulous was it.

"I can't do it."

"Why not?"

Bob's words came uncertainly. "I can't afford it. I need every cent that isn't tied up, for the campaign."

"You could go on my paper."

Bob shook his head. "No, not on an uncertainty."

Paul said nothing. For a minute he sat by the desk, drumming his fingers on the polished top. Then he rose, drawing a long, whistling breath, and without another word went out.

Bob stared in troubled perplexity at the doorway, which Paul had neglected to close. He did not know that he spoke aloud, in the same constrained, querulous voice.

"What is it? I can't use the weapons I have. The game has passed out of my hands. . . . And he's not worth the trouble he causes. He's not worth what I offer. He's not worth—her. I'm not worth—her."

Paul went out into the streets, disappointed, hurt, almost bitter against Bob. Poor Paul! He was one of those to whom the present want is always the keenest. In all probability twenty-four hours later the desire would have lost its force, but when he left Bob his one want was to clear fifty thousand dollars in Consolidated Glass. And he could not know that Bob, swayed by a new-born shame and self-distrust—yes, self-distrust—had refused the loan only that he might never be tempted to use the obligation as a club.

And that day fate—Murchell would have said, the Force—busily interested in a greater than Paul, led him into dangerous paths. For when he reached the streets, his aimless tramping guided him past the First National Bank, which, as all the city knows, is controlled by the Sanger interests. And fate must at that very moment bring Henry Sanger, Junior's, automobile to a stop in front of the bank. Sanger stepped out and, seeing Paul, paused long enough for a genial word and handshake before he entered the bank. Paul walked a few blocks farther before the recollection of a certain promise brought him to a sudden halt. "If ever I can do anything for you personally, let me know," Sanger had said heartily. Paul hastily and determinedly began to tramp again.

"Why not?" demanded the desire of the moment.

"Dangerous," counseled Conscience.

"Fifty thousand dollars is a great deal of money," suggested Desire.

"Sanger has twice tried to tempt you," cautioned Prudence.

"It's a poor friendship that stands between me and my interest," sneered Desire.

"And besides," Paul argued with himself, "this is only personal. If I yield to temptation, it will be for a greater thing than money. I'll just drop in and see whether Sanger thinks well of the tip."

So he walked back to the bank and into the directors' room, where sat Sanger. Sanger greeted Paul with a pleased surprise very flattering to our susceptible friend. For a few minutes they talked of various unimportant subjects. Then Sanger looked at his watch.

"Anything I can do for you, Remington? Sorry, but I've got to leave in a few minutes."

"Well," Paul answered hesitatingly, "if it's none of my business, say so. I got a tip last night to buy Consolidated Glass. What do you think of it?"

Sanger smoked reflectively for a minute. "Can I depend on you to let what I say go no further?"

"Certainly."

"It's a good tip. Go in on it to the limit. You're safe."

Paul laughed rather shamefacedly. "I'm going to, but my limit isn't very big. About twenty-five hundred."

"Why don't you borrow and plunge?"

Paul laughed again, this time sharply. "My credit doesn't seem very good. I tried it in one place I thought was sure, but it did no good."

Sanger sent three beautiful smoke rings into the air, thoughtfully. Paul had not said whom he had asked for the loan, but Sanger thought he could guess. Then he whirled sharply in his chair.

"How much did you want?"

"I asked for twenty-five thousand."

"Absurd, on a deal like this. Make it fifty," Sanger said heartily.

"Do you mean—" Paul began delightedly.

"Certainly, I mean it," Sanger responded energetically. "I'm going to instruct my broker to buy five thousand shares for you. Leave it to me," he added smilingly, "and if you're not considerably richer a week from to-day, you don't owe me a cent."

Paul hesitated. Somewhere down in his heart there was a faint protest. "Of course, this doesn't pledge me to anything politically?"

"Of course not," Sanger replied with an air of injured virtue. "I hope you don't think I would try to bribe *you.*" His slight emphasis was subtly flattering. Paul felt relieved. "This affair is between you and me personally, not politically. Of course," he added, with a frank laugh, "I shouldn't want you to use any of it against me politically."

"Certainly not," Paul responded gratefully. "Mr. Sanger, you can't imagine—"

"Tut! tut!" Sanger interrupted bruskly. "No thanks. I appreciate your coming to me. Drop in and see me any time. Good afternoon." And he held out a cordial hand to Paul, who took it and went out, thinking bitterly:

"It seems that an enemy can be more generous than a friend, sometimes."

That night Bob was scheduled to speak in the Fourth Ward. And all Irishtown had made ready. Well Haggin knew that no mere school-house auditorium would be ample for this occasion. So a great, bare hall was hired. Flags and bunting galore had been secured—at Haggin's expense—and hung around the bare walls and ceiling, more profusely perhaps than artistically. Hardly had darkness fallen that evening when the streets and saloons of Irishtown began to fill with a boisterous, excited throng on its way to the meeting. A half-dozen brass bands marched and played lustily, followed by as many McAdoo marching clubs, gaudily uniformed, trudging jubilantly through the muddy streets, carrying red fire and transparencies painted with loyal devices. One transparency in particular aroused the wildest enthusiasm; it declared to the world: "To Hell With Larkin! We're for Bob McAdoo!" At eight o'clock the bands united before the hall and marched playing, to the platform. After them trooped the marching clubs and the noisy, riotously happy crowds—all Irishtown gathered to welcome its favorite son.

Dear, loyal Irishtown! Many harsh words have been spoken of it by the Steel City's silk-stocking reformers. Always was it the backbone of this or that political machine; often was it the scene of the vilest corruption. But Irishtown can be forgiven much for the thing it did that night and for certain majorities which it gave later. Of the real issues of the campaign Irishtown knew little and cared less. It was enough that the candidate was "th' grrand fightin' man" who had lived in their midst and battled his way to mastery over the city.

The meeting was notable, first, because Paul Remington made the poorest speech of his career. After Paul, Martin spoke. The audience listened respectfully, but with inward impatience; they had not come to listen to oratory, however glowing. While Martin was yet speaking, those near to the windows heard the panting of an automobile. "He's coming," the whisper ran over the hall. Necks craned in anticipation; a few rose to their feet, gathering their powers for a shout. Several men quietly entered the platform from a side door. After them came Bob McAdoo.

Bob had been cheered before, and since then he has received "ovations" from greater and more select audiences. But neither before nor since has he been greeted with the spontaneous, thunderous welcome which Irishtown gave him that night. Four thousand, and not a weak voice among them, rose and shouted like mad, shouted and shouted again until for very physical inability they were compelled to cease. Through it all the man to whom they were shouting their loyalty stood, motionless and unsmiling, stirred to the depths.

Martin, interrupted in the midst of a climax, waved his hand approvingly at the crowd and joined in the cheers himself. As the shouting continued, he reached across the table and grasped Bob's hand.

"By God! old man," he cried, with an unwonted familiarity. "I'd give twenty years of my life to be greeted like that just once."

But Bob did not hear his words or notice the handclasp.

When the tumult died down, Martin took a seat, leaving his speech unfinished, and Bob began.

It was not much of a speech. His voice was hoarse. The words fell jerkily and with no attempt at oratorical flourish. But his audience listened intently, proudly. In less than ten minutes he closed, with these words:

"You are my kind of people. I've lived most of my life among you. I know you and you know me. There are more dollars against me in this fight than you can grasp the meaning of. But the fight won't end until I die. I want you to stand by me."

The shout that met this appeal was a prophecy.

When the meeting was over and Bob was shaking hands with his old neighbors, Haggin espied Paul standing alone in a corner of the platform. He rushed over and clapped the young man vigorously on the shoulder.

"Ain't it great?" he whispered; his voice was gone. "Greatest meetin' I ever seen. O, he's a winner fer sure!"

"Yes," Paul replied, with a queer laugh. "He's a winner—in this, anyhow."

He slipped away from the hall and went home alone.

Hours afterward Kathleen, for the third night in succession, was awakened by the sound of a steady pacing to and fro in the room above her. She arose and, hastily dressing, went up-stairs. Knocking, she entered and went up to Bob.

"Bob," she said directly, "there's been something wrong lately."

"Always, Kathleen," he answered in a tired voice.

"Can't I help you with it?" she asked gently.

He shook his head hopelessly. "No one can help me. It's only that I'm ashamed. Go back to bed and quit bothering about me, Kathleen. I'm not worth it."

Something in his voice and haggard face caused the tears to start to her eyes. She turned away and left him. The monotonous pacing to and fro began again.

CHAPTER XVII

STRATAGEMS

WHEN Eleanor left the Dunmeade household she was convinced that she did not care ever again to see the grimy, busy Steel City. Therefore she went to New York, ostensibly to visit a friend of her school-days; in reality, that she might think out the new problem confronting her.

Two very gay weeks followed; gay, that is, on the surface. Yet even in the midst of the social whirl she found time to fight her battle. And she felt a sort of detached wonder at herself, as she discovered how frankly and bravely she could accept the situation.

There was one thing that she made no effort to disguise from herself.

Every day she despatched a servant to get the Steel City papers. When they were brought to her she spent long hours poring over them. One day they contained an account of a monster mass meeting—though the *Gazette* unblushingly declared it a "frost"—held in the city's principal hall in McAdoo's interest. She noticed with vague misgiving that no mention was made of Paul Remington's presence on the platform. On the first page of one of the papers was a photograph of the Republican candidate, the first she had ever seen of him; his eyes looked straight out at the reader. Long after the accounts had been read she sat, gravely studying the picture. She remained alone until the afternoon waned, musing wistfully. Several times she caught her hands stroking the paper caressingly; and once she had to rub her eyes vigorously—to see the better, no doubt. At last she came to a resolution.

"I will go back," she declared to herself. "And to-night." Calling a maid, she had her trunk packed at once.

Nor could all the arguments and pleas of her hostess dissuade her.

"Why do you want to go back to that place?" protested the latter complainingly. "Why should *any one* want to go to that dirty, ugly, common city?"

"I must. If I didn't, I might become as provincial as you New Yorkers," Eleanor insisted smilingly.

"I just know there is a man in it," her hostess declared petulantly.

Eleanor was rather proud of her laugh. "Two, my dear."

"I don't believe it. One might endure the Steel City for *one* man, never for two."

"Nevertheless, I'm going home to-night." But as she said "home," Eleanor felt a lump rise in her throat.

She reached the city early next morning. At noon her brother came home to luncheon, much to her surprise. It was his custom to lunch at one of his clubs. At its conclusion he made no move to return to his office; and Sanger was a busy man.

"Well?" she queried, with a smile. "Out with it. What did you come home to tell me?"

"Eleanor, why don't you marry Paul Remington?"

"Why?"

"He is in love with you. He is a charming fellow. I have taken an interest in him. He is a rising man—or can rise under favorable conditions which I am ready to insure. And, forgive me, my dear, but—thirty is coming."

She smiled pleasantly. "I'm not afraid of thirty."

"I'm serious in this, Eleanor," he went on evenly. "It's all well enough for you to ignore the future. Of course, you're welcome to make this your home as long as you choose and to draw on me for what you want. But the time will come when you won't be content with this arrangement. I have sometimes fancied that you are discontented already."

"That is true," she said, with a sigh.

"If you were to marry Remington, it would be different. You would have a home of your own and an interest in the future—a big interest, too. As I say, he's a rising man. Under certain conditions, he has a chance for the next governorship—"

"What do you know of Mr. McAdoo's plans?" she asked, surprised.

"McAdoo—" Sanger began, almost venomously. Then he went on calmly, "McAdoo doesn't necessarily have the last word in these things. After the governorship there is no reason why Remington shouldn't go to Washington. With our money and influence back of him he would be of importance there. You and he could open an establishment and you could be a great help to him. You would find it interesting, I imagine."

"Who guarantees these promises?" she asked, looking at him thoughtfully.

"I'm willing to underwrite them myself."

"Henry, just what are you politically?"

Sanger answered quietly. "My money is one of the sources of political power. Personally, I am the opposition to McAdoo. Or, at least, I suggested and am financing it."

Eleanor was startled. "Why?"

"I think I'll take you into my confidence," he began. Then he hesitated.

"Why not?" as if to himself. "You're a Sanger through and through. You'll understand it."

"With me," he said, addressing her directly, "it's a question of how I am to apply my ability. I'm only forty-five years old and in perfect health. We Sangers aren't idlers. I could go on and get together a tremendous fortune, so big that I'd be a slave to it. But already I'm worth fifty millions—"

"I didn't know you were so rich!"

"Very few even suspect it," he returned calmly. "That's plenty for any man, even in these days. And my holdings are so disposed that I have both time and energy to spare for other activities. Two years from now this state will choose a new senator. The choice, I think, will fall upon Henry Sanger, Jr. And the minute I take the oath of office—"

"If you do?"

"*When* I do, I become a national power. My office multiplied by my money and my backing. The senate is the most powerful body in our government. Behind me will be the influence of the principal financial combinations in the country. Only one man in the senate has the backing I shall have, and he is an old man. Soon he must die or retire, and his leadership will fall to me. I shall control the senate, which controls all national legislation." Sanger's eyes began to glitter.

"And then, of course," Eleanor laughed, "there is the presidency."

"It is within the possibilities," he responded coolly.

She looked at him with an inward wonder. "I thought you cared only to make money! You dream big dreams, Henry."

"Why not? I have the brains. I have the money. I have the influence. I don't recognize limitations."

He resumed, only the bright glitter in his eyes marking the ripple on his wonted serenity.

"I'm not talking wildly. For some time I have been working solely to this end. I'm not the sort to waste energy. What I suggest is now a certainty—but for one thing. Between me and my ambition there is but one obstacle—one man, Robert McAdoo."

"Robert McAdoo!"

"Yes. For reasons you wouldn't understand, this city is the key to the situation in the state. If McAdoo wins out, he will own the local organization. He will hold the balance of power. And he has told me himself that he intends to join Murchell and Dunmeade. Not only that. It isn't generally known, but Murchell can hardly live out the year. The present campaign is killing him. When he dies, McAdoo will take his place. Dunmeade has big ideas, but he can't carry them out by himself. That is the importance of this campaign. If McAdoo loses, he loses his hold on the local organization. It also lessens his value to Cousin John. If Dunmeade is left to himself, I have no fear of the result. Of course, in any case I can win out eventually. My money will wear them out in the end. But their victory now may delay my plans several years. I'm not in the habit of waiting. Therefore McAdoo must get out of my way!"

"Ah!" She had heard that phrase from another.

Sanger's serenity was slowly giving way to his inward excitement. "Here is where Remington comes in. As it looks now, McAdoo is sure to win. He has got a grip on this city that I can't understand. It is contrary to all political precedents. Nothing that we have tried so far, money, organization, newspaper attacks—"

Eleanor started. "Henry! Do *you* own the *Gazette?*"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Then you are responsible for the slanders against Mr. McAdoo?"

"Nonsense! You have been listening to the Dunmeades. We have published nothing that hasn't been essentially true. If he hasn't been guilty himself, he has been connected with the men who were. Which is the same thing. As I say, nothing we have tried so far has succeeded in stopping him. But we have one card left that, I think, will settle friend McAdoo, if played at the right time and by the right person."

He paused. "He has been posing as a sort of reformer. What do you think the people, who are shouting themselves hoarse over him to-day, will think when they hear that the delegates whose votes nominated him were bribed with his money?"

"Another lie?"

"I suggest the use of another word, if you please," he said icily. "This is true. I already have half a dozen affidavits from delegates who took his money."

"Then why haven't you published them?"

"Because they won't be effective. The testimony of an accomplice is never more than half believed. The exposure must come from a different source. I want Paul Remington to make the revelation. Think!" Sanger's manner had lost all of its accustomed urbanity. He was talking rapidly. Through the narrowed lids his eyes gleamed fiercely. "Think! This city is in the midst of the most exciting campaign it has ever known. The whole state is watching McAdoo—McAdoo, the reformed and reformer. In the last hours of the campaign the man who for years has been known as his only close personal friend suddenly breaks with him and exposes the reformer as a candidate who won his nomination by flat, incontestable bribery! There isn't a man living who could withstand the reaction.

"And that," he concluded, "is why I want you to marry Remington."

She looked at him curiously. "I see. You want to use me as a bribe to buy Mr. Remington's betrayal of his friend."

"Bah! Don't be melodramatic. There's no treachery here, no moral wrong. I offer Remington a thousand times more than McAdoo could ever give him. As my fellow senator from this state he will have an influence and importance second only to mine. I offer you a future you can never have otherwise. A brainy woman in Washington can do a great deal to help me.

You would be by partner. As my sister and Senator Remington's wife you would be welcomed wherever you chose to go. And this is offered you merely for the public telling of the truth about a man who is morally and legally a criminal."

"I seem to remember," she said quietly, "that he was driven to buy the delegates by Hemenway's withdrawal. Do you always work through treachery, Henry?"

Sanger assumed an air of hurt reproach. "My dear sister, you're unfair. You defend him on the ground that he was driven to dishonesty to meet similar tactics, but for the same action you criticize me. One would almost believe this demagogue is something to you."

Her glance did not waver. "At least, he is a human being." Then she continued in the most matter-of-fact tone in the world, "In short, you offer me the bribe of a career of social prominence and political intrigue—with a husband thrown in—"

Sanger had recovered his composed manner. "My dear girl!" he protested urbanely, "not bribe! Say rather that, since my sister will have done me a service of inestimable value, I will show my appreciation by helping her to a life to which she, better than any other woman I know, is fitted."

She waved her hand impatiently. "Is there any other way in which you will show your appreciation and affection?"

"There would be settlements, of course."

She studied him frankly. "Henry," she said at last, "I believe—I actually believe—you see nothing wrong in your proposal. Have you no moral sensibility?"

"Don't be absurd," he answered impatiently. "Certainly there's nothing morally wrong in the proposal. As for McAdoo, I have no regard for him. As a dishonest, dangerous man he deserves no consideration from any one. As for Remington, I serve his best interests. As for you, my dear, I have your happiness at heart." His smile proclaimed the very perfection of brotherly affection. "You see, I've discovered your secret. You're in love with Remington. And I want you to marry him under conditions most favorable to your future happiness and content."

"So you think I'm in love with him?"

"O, yes," he laughed easily, "you may fool your lover, but not your loving brother. I've seen the change in you these last few weeks. Only one thing can account for it—you're in love. Who could it be but Remington? You see, it's very simple."

"I see," she said. She began to fold and refold her napkin absently. Sanger waited patiently.

"Well?" he suggested at last.

She raised her eyes to his with a start and leaned indolently back in her chair, tapping her mouth to emphasize her yawn.

"Henry, you are too crafty by far. I shan't inflict you with hysterical reproaches. I realize there has been nothing in my life—nothing you are aware of, at least—to lead you to believe your proposal distasteful to me. But really I must decline. Of course, I quite understand it would be useless for me to try to dissuade you from attacking Mr. McAdoo unfairly, although it might be more to your credit to cease." She spoke indifferently.

Sanger rested his folded arms on the table and looked at her steadily. When he answered, there was an edge to his voice she had never heard before.

"You're quite correct. If it takes twenty years, I intend to crush that man. Whatever means are necessary I shall use. The end justifies them. But that is neither here nor there. I give you the chance to better both yourself and the man you love. I hope you won't be so foolish as to refuse it."

"Let us drop the discussion, please."

He rose.

"I'll say no more about it, but I don't consider the matter settled. This is Friday, the election is Tuesday. That is a short time, but not too short. I leave it to your own common sense. If by Monday afternoon Remington comes to me and subscribes to the interview I shall dictate, you'll not find me ungrateful."

Left alone, Eleanor went up to her sitting-room. She threw herself on a couch in profound disgust.

"And that man is my brother. He's a thousand times more relentless than—than the other. And the shameful part of it is," she cried in bitter self-accusation, "that two weeks ago his offer would have tempted me. No wonder *he* hates us."

When Sanger reached his office he telephoned to Paul, asking him to call on him at some convenient time. Paul, who had eagerly perused the morning's stock market reports, appeared with exemplary promptness. Sanger met him pleasantly.

"I merely wanted the pleasure of giving you this myself." And he handed Paul a check.

Paul took it and stared at it, as though fascinated. Then his face broke into a boyish, gleeful smile.

"Mr. Sanger," he laughed, "this is the finest bit of literature ever written. You can't know what it means to me."

"What will you do with it?" Sanger queried with smiling curiosity.

Paul waved the check gaily through the air. "O, man, don't ask me. My mind's all a jumble, like a youngster's the night before Christmas. But," he added, suddenly becoming earnest, "I mustn't forget I owe it to you. Mr. Sanger, it has been mighty generous of you. I don't know how to thank you. I can never repay you."

"Nonsense! I charged you interest for the margin money. You owe me nothing—but a box of cigars." He pushed a box across the desk toward Paul. "Here's the brand I smoke. Try one."

He chose a cigar for himself and pointed it peremptorily at Paul.

"Now sit down. Put that check in your pocket and out of your mind. The transaction is closed, absolutely and for ever, as between us—always excepting that box of cigars. You're worth so many dollars, thanks to your tip from drunken Brown. You will find matches over there." He leaned to light his cigar from Paul's match. When both cigars were drawing nicely, Sanger sank back in his chair and for the third time took Paul into the high mountain.

"Remington, I like you. I don't give a personal interest to many people. I'm not sentimental; I'm as unromantic as a cold in the head. But you're an exception. That was why I confirmed Brown's tip. It was my only reason. I want you to understand that it had no connection with what I'm going to say. I expect you to accept or refuse my proposal without considering this stock transaction. Will you listen to me on those terms?"

Paul, foreseeing what was coming, steeled himself, looking at the check with troubled eyes.

"Yes," he said slowly, "on those terms."

Sanger's nod was frankness itself. "Thank you. I can now talk freely.

"Remington," he continued, "I don't know what you think of me—probably that I'm a mere money grubber and that my political interest is purely financial. That is wrong. I take you into my confidence. I have personal political ambitions. You perhaps understand me well enough to know that my ambitions can't be small. Remington—" every time his name was repeated Paul started as though he had received an electric shock—"I want to be the next senator from this state."

"Senator!" Paul exclaimed in unfeigned amazement.

"Yes, Remington, twice I have asked you to help me. Twice you have refused. Will you tell me frankly, why?"

"You have yourself charged me with being a friend of the people," Paul parried, trying to speak jocularly.

Sanger leveled an accusing finger at Paul, his face twitching mirthfully. "Remington, I'm not a fool. You don't care a two-penny damn for the people."

"Still there are honor and loyalty, you know," Paul said gravely.

"Honor? Whose honor?"

"Mine."

"Loyalty—to whom?"

"To the man who has made me politically valuable to you—to McAdoo."

"Why should you be loyal to him?"

"Because he has been loyal to me."

"Honor! Loyalty! McAdoo! Ha!" Sanger's snort, a departure from his usual suave manner, expressed the very depth of disgust.

"Mr. Sanger, your tone—"

"If my tone doesn't speak the highest regard for you," Sanger interrupted forcefully, "I express myself poorly. I admire your loyalty and respect you for it. You're an example to put us more selfish men to shame. But when I learned how you have been played upon, on my soul I pitied you."

"What do you mean?" Sanger thought he detected a note of anxiety in Paul's words.

"I mean that you're the victim of base ingratitude. Treachery, I call it. You may not know how strong I am in state politics. Take my word for it, I am so strong I could go to McAdoo, as I did, and offer to make him boss of the state—"

"Why, that is his—"

"Yes, that is his ambition. You know him better than I do. Therefore I needn't tell you he is swayed by no lofty ideals of political purity."

"No," Paul laughed, striving to give the conversation a humorous tone. "Bob is a politician."

"But he refused. When a man like him refuses the chance to realize his pet ambition, he can't lay it to noble ideals. He has lower motives. His motive in this case isn't hard to find—he hates me—and my sister?" The last words were a chance shot. Paul stirred uneasily in his seat.

"Yes, he hates you—and Mrs. Gilbert."

"That isn't all. Part of my offer was to make you the next governor—"

"What! Me governor! It is more than I have dared to dream of, so soon."

"But not more than you're worthy of. However, there's no use discussing that, since it was included in his refusal. He placed his hate of me and my sister higher than his loyalty to you."

"Man, don't!" The cry told Sanger that he had at last penetrated a joint in Paul's armor. "Mr. Sanger, I—I beg of you—"

Sanger sprang to his feet, his finger leveled at Paul. "Remington, wait! For once you shall hear the truth straight. You're the victim of your romanticist's dreaming. You talk of honor! Is it honor that lets you be played the fool by a man who uses you to lift himself to political heights but refuses to carry you up with him? You talk of loyalty. Loyalty is a fine thing—when mutual! But what is it, when the man to whom you give it and from whom you have earned it won't ignore a petty hatred when by doing so he could make you governor of this state?"

A pen which Paul had been fumbling snapped suddenly. "Mr. Sanger," he cried pleadingly, "I must ask you to end this—"

"Remington, you shall hear me out. O, he has played a pretty game! He has blinded you with false political theories, that he might keep the upper hand of you. In his pretended omniscience he has predicted a wonderful uprising of the people in the future—he doesn't say when, always in the future, one of those to-morrows that never come. He says, 'Let us be friends of the people—because it's going to pay some day.' He teaches you to be a hypocrite—like himself. But what—" Sanger concluded dramatically, "what do you think the people—the dear, dear people!—will think of your friend next Monday, when they learn that the great reformer won his nomination by bribing the delegates of the convention?"

Paul rose uncertainly to his feet, staring wildly at Sanger. "My God! no! That can't be true. It's some damned lie—"

"And do you think," Sanger insisted triumphantly, "that you, his chief supporter, can clear your skirts of the mud?"

"Mr. Sanger, what proof have you of this?"

"Read that, and that, and that, and these." Sanger caught up and tossed to Paul a sheaf of documents.

With trembling hands and a sickening sensation at his stomach, Paul read through the papers. They were affidavits of delegates, setting forth the facts of their bribing. When he had read them through he dropped weakly into his chair.

"Good God!" he groaned, covering his face with his hands. "Good God!"

"It's hard on you, I know," Sanger said gently. "And it adds to my determination to crush the man who seeks to drag you into his disgrace. Remington! twice you have refused to come with me. I ask you again, and for the last time. The offer I made to McAdoo I repeat to you. And when your term as governor is ended, you and I will work together as senators from the greatest state in the union. All I ask is that you publicly cut loose from McAdoo, disavowing your own connection or knowledge of his corrupt practices. Here is your reason." He tapped the sheaf of affidavits.

Paul's hand dropped to the table, and he looked up at Sanger, a hunted look in his eyes. "Have you no mercy?"

Sanger suddenly leaned over and grasped him by the arm.

"Mercy! I have told you I like you, man. When you and I are the two most powerful members of the most powerful branch of our government, you won't talk of mercy. I ask you nothing wrong. Only what is your duty, to the people who have been deceived, and to yourself. And—" he hesitated. "And I have more reasons than one for liking you. I hope soon to know you in a closer relation—" He paused artistically.

Paul shook his head despondently. "No, I fear there's no hope for me."

Sanger shook his arm vigorously. "For shame, man! Faint heart, you know— And my own opinion is that you have no reason to be faint of heart."

Paul turned white, his heart gave a great throb. Even Sanger was touched by the passionate joy that flashed across Paul's face.

"Do you really believe—" Paul began to stammer incredulously.

"I'm sure of it," Sanger said quietly. "And I'm glad of it. Come, burn your bridges." He tapped the sheaf of affidavits again. "You know best whether she wants you to do it or not."

The joy faded from Paul's face, he answered in a despairing cry, "God help me! Nothing seems right. Nothing is clear. I must stand by him. I can't do what you ask—and I can't say no."

He turned and fled from the temptation, as though pursued by an overwhelming enemy. As indeed he was.

Sanger watched his exit with narrowed eyes. "But he didn't return the check," he thought cynically—and hopefully.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BREACH

THE Saturday afternoon before election day found Bob in his office, pacing back and forth as rapidly as the restricted quarters would allow. He was on the verge of a physical breakdown, although his lack of experience of bodily ills hid the fact from him. He was beset by a wearing restlessness that did not permit of physical inaction. From the outer room came the monotonous click-click of Miss Jones' typewriter. He flung open the door, an irritable protest on his lips. He was just in time to see the industrious Miss Jones yawn, daintily but wearily. The irritable protest changed its form.

"Miss Jones, close that typewriter and go home. You've worked enough."

She looked up, astounded. Bob's orders generally meant more work for her.

"But there are still nearly a thousand of these envelopes to address," she protested.

"Never mind them," he said gruffly. "You've been working too hard. You need a rest."

Miss Jones laughed, but with inward quaking for her boldness. "I guess you'd better look into a mirror before you call anybody down for working too hard." She opened a drawer of her desk and held up a hand-mirror for his inspection.

"Humph! Not very good-looking, am I?"

"Oh!" Miss Jones declared wisely. "Men don't need to be. It's *much* nicer for them to be big and strong. To be good-looking wouldn't suit you at all." she added with generous intent to comfort.

"No, it wouldn't suit me," he growled.

Miss Jones, somewhat embarrassed, quickly changed the subject.

"Mr. McAdoo, we're going to win, aren't we?"

"We?"

She nodded. "I'll feel awful bad if you lose. So'll a lot of people."

He looked at her curiously. "I thought you didn't like me?"

The blonde head shook vigorously.

"That's ambiguous, Miss Jones."

She looked up to discover whether or not he was laughing at her; his face was quite serious. There was no ambiguity in her emphatic nod. "I *was* afraid of you," she confessed shyly, "till I found out you're cross only on the outside. You *try* to be cruel, but you aren't."

"Where did you pick up that nonsense?"

"Well," she answered diffidently, and rather at a loss to explain her intuition, "that newsboy that was hurt and you're sending to school. And you'd do anything for Mr. Remington."

"More than he would do for me, I suspect," he said sadly. The words slipped out before he was aware of it.

Miss Jones, vaguely conscious that something was wrong and that sympathy was in order, hastily reopened the drawer and unearthed a box of candies.

"Have some. They're good and fresh," she invited timidly.

Awkwardly his big fingers picked out a daintily wrapped sweet. He smiled in spite of himself at her evident attempt to comfort him.

"They're to eat, you know," she suggested, setting him the example. "You hold it as though you didn't know what to do with it."

"I don't know what they taste like," he confessed. "When I was a kid, I didn't get candies. I was only a tough little newsie. I chewed tobacco."

Miss Jones laughed outright. "Oh!" she exclaimed in frightened apology. "You said that in *such* a funny-bitter way."

"Laugh away. I don't mind," he said gruffly. "I'd laugh myself if I could get the right point of view. Now you close that desk. You've done enough this campaign. When *we* win, we'll divide the credit."

Miss Jones went home, very much amazed and even more proud of the big politician's sudden friendliness. So much elated, in fact, that the same evening she finally accepted the young man who worked across the corridor and gave her candy. And Bob went back to his little room, wondering at the comfort a bit of human sympathy carries with it, even if it is only the awkward, unintelligent sympathy of one's vain little stenographer.

Later, Paul entered the outer office. Bob nodded through the open door.

"Hello, Paul."

"Good afternoon," Paul answered with cold formal-ity, and passed into his own office, carefully closing the door behind him. Bob hesitated. Then he went to Remington's door. He was on the point of entering without warning, as had always been their custom, but he paused abruptly and knocked.

"Come," was the curt answer.

Bob entered. He stood waiting for the invitation to sit down. As it was not forthcoming, he calmly sat down without it. Neither spoke at first, Paul pretending to be busy arranging the papers on his desk. The smoke from Bob's tobacco filled the room. The silence became uncomfortable. Paul was the first to break it.

"Why in thunder don't you smoke something besides those rotten tobies?" he exclaimed petulantly.

Bob took the offending toby from his mouth and looked at it in mild surprise. "You're becoming too aristocratic for a politician. I was brought up on tobies and lately I've taken to them again." He replaced the "toby" in his mouth and emitted a cloud of strong, pungent smoke. Another silence ensued.

At last Paul dropped his papers and glanced coldly at Bob.

"Well? You've come for something, I suppose?"

Bob watched the curling smoke a moment before answering.

"I see your tip was good, after all. Did you go in on it?"

For answer Paul opened a drawer of his desk and drew out the check that Sanger had given him and which he had not yet deposited. He handed it across the table. Bob read it over twice before he looked at Paul.

"That's a good deal of money," he said quietly. "More than the average man earns in a lifetime. You made it in a week, without lifting a finger. When you come to think of it, that isn't fair, is it?"

"As a moralist, you're not a conspicuous success," Paul retorted coldly. "The point is, I have the money. Beyond that, nothing is to be said."

"Yes," Bob assented with a sudden unwonted air of cheerfulness. "Who staked you?"

Paul's head went up a trifle, defiantly. "Sanger."

"Sanger!"

"I gave you the chance first."

"But Sanger's an enemy. It's bad policy to get under obligations to a man you've got to fight," Bob answered evenly.

"Your enemy, you mean," Paul sneered. "Not mine, as this check proves."

"Evidently." Bob looked out of the window.

Another silence, again broken by Paul. "See here, McAdoo!"

Bob turned slowly at the name. "Yes? You've upset the ink—" he paused—"Paul." There was a slight emphasis on the name, which Paul did not heed. The latter seized a blotting pad and impatiently mopped up the ink. Then he turned again to Bob.

"There are some things you and I've got to come to an understanding about."

"And they are—?"

"In the first place, why did you take me up?"

"You've asked me that before."

"Don't temporize. I ask it again."

Bob smiled. "You seem to have put me on the witness stand. However, I'm not bound to answer."

"Aren't you?" Paul said with an ugly laugh. "Maybe I can answer for you. It strikes me you took me up to make use of me and to keep me down where I could never demand what I've earned. That's true, isn't it?"

"It strikes you that way? A few thousand dollars put a different light on a good many things, don't they?" Bob inquired with suspicious gentleness.

"Save your insults for your hired heelers," Paul struck the table angrily. "I'm not one of them."

Bob threw away his consumed toby and took a cigar from his pocket. "Since you object to my tobies, I'll try a cigar." He held a match to it and puffed vigorously several times.

"Is there anything else Sanger—your friend Sanger—suggested to you?"

"Yes," Paul declared with angry vehemence, "he *is* my friend. I want that understood. As for what else he has suggested—I've learned from him what you didn't dare tell me, that he offered to help make me governor, and you refused."

"Well, what of it? You wouldn't have me take up that offer, would you?"

"Why not?"

"I might refer you to a certain speech of yours for reasons."

"Bah!" Paul threw out his arms in a gesture of supreme disgust. "Don't try to come that slush on me. The rôle of sanctimonious Pharisee doesn't suit you, McAdoo. We're in this game to help ourselves. Be decent enough to admit that to yourself, even if you are fooling the silly public."

"So you class us all together, you and Sanger and me—liars, hypocrites, bunco-steerers? Proceed with the indictment. There are other counts, I suppose?"

"You seem to take it all as a joke," Paul exclaimed bitterly. "But I suppose you have a right to consider me a joke, after the way I've played the fool for you."

Bob heard this outburst impassively to all outward seeming. "What do you expect? Sentimental protestations? You'd have the right to take *me* as a joke, if I did that. Proceed."

"Very well," Paul continued sharply, pressing his lips together tightly. "My next count confirms what I said about your unfitness for the virtuous rôle—"

"One moment!" Bob raised a deprecating hand. "Don't you think it would be wiser—at least, more charitable—to moderate your expressions a bit?"

"No! I propose to call things by their proper names for once. O, I admit I was fooled with the rest. I supposed that McAdoo had reformed his methods, at least, if not his ideals—until I was informed that you bribed the delegates whose votes nominated you."

"You get this from Sanger?"

"Yes. Even your enemies know of it. You're at their mercy now."

"I see," Bob nodded thoughtfully. "Some of Malassey's work, I suspect."

"You mean to say it isn't true?" Paul demanded quickly.

"No. The delegates were bribed, all right. Sanger, through his agents, had already bribed them the other way. I supposed you knew that."

But Paul, rather heavily let down though he was by this phase of the matter, was too far gone in his mood to retreat.

"No," he said surlily. "I didn't know it. You may recall that I was never taken into your confidence very fully. But even so, you had no excuse for using methods that must discredit others with you."

Bob smiled queerly. "You're right, unquestionably."

"What's to hinder me from saving *my* reputation by disclosing the whole transaction to the public? I can do it, now you've confessed your guilt."

"Nothing in the world to hinder," Bob replied. Only the fall of his cigar, bitten through, indicated any feeling. "Is there anything more?" He carefully flicked the ashes from his coat.

"Yes!" Paul went on impetuously, his mood gathering momentum. "There's one thing more. It—it concerns Mrs. Gilbert."

Bob's apparent cheerfulness shaded off into quiet expectancy. He looked at Paul steadily.

"What of Mrs. Gilbert?"

"I refer to your officious interference between her and myself," Paul continued. "I confided to you my regard for her. You took it upon yourself to object to it. You even went so far as to call upon her—"

"I did."

"I believe I am right in saying that your conversation concerned me—"

"Yes."

"—and that you gave her to understand, how directly I can only imagine, that you opposed our intimacy?"

"Yes."

"You carried your interference so far that Mrs. Gilbert has refused to marry me unless you withdraw your opposition. I wish you to understand that I consider your action an unwarranted intrusion into my private affairs. I refuse to be bound by your prejudices. I am competent to live my own life without your supervision. I don't propose to endure your meddling. You understand," his voice rose, "I won't stand it."

"You make yourself entirely clear, I think," Bob said evenly.

"Furthermore, since you've intruded your opposition, I expect you to withdraw it, finally and absolutely. Otherwise—" His pause was ominous.

"That's hardly necessary. You're not a minor, nor am I your guardian, that my consent is necessary. You will be able to persuade Mrs. Gilbert to take that view, I think—and threats do no good."

Bob made an effort to smile. It was not a smile you would care to see more than once, the smile of a strong man trying to conceal bitterest suffering and humiliation. By a trick of fancy Paul's angry, handsome face seemed to fade away and in its stead Bob saw the face of a stricken woman. . . . Modern invention had lifted them far above the noises of the street. The two men were alone in the midst of a heavy, oppressive silence. Both knew that they had come to the parting of the ways. In time to come a new footing might be established, but the old intimate relation could never be resumed. Words had been spoken that neither could forget.

I think that even then Paul would have retracted his words, had Bob offered him an opening. He had not planned the conversation, but when it was begun Bob's composure had goaded him to reckless lengths. Now he began dimly to perceive how deeply he had struck. He broke the silence with what was almost an appeal.

"Have you anything to say?"

Bob shook his head slowly. "No, there's nothing more to be said—now. They were counting on you to make a speech to the executive committee this afternoon. I suppose you will not be there?"

Paul shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "No, I have an appointment with my manicure. I have a weakness for clean hands, you know."

He caught up his hat and coat and walked out of the office.

As the door closed, the mask of Bob's composure fell from him. The smile disappeared. His shoulders drooped and his head fell forward.

"Paul!" he whispered. "Paul!"

How he got through the rest of the day Bob hardly knew. In the evening there was the final rally, to which flocked thousands and from which hundreds more were turned away for lack of room. Bob made a speech, but his recollection of that effort is hazy. When he rose to speak, the waves of applause came to his ears as the far-away thunder of the sea. He was conscious of a mild surprise when his words were broken in upon by frequent expressions of enthusiastic approval from his audience; he himself felt no interest in what he was saying. When his speech was concluded and the last outburst of enthusiasm had died away, he quietly left the meeting and went home.

The Flinn family was gathered in the library. At the sound of the closing door they rushed out to meet him, eager for tidings of the rally; even Patrick, whom rheumatism had converted into a profanely protesting stay-at-home, hobbling painfully out to the hall. But when they saw Bob, they forgot all about the meeting. Kathleen put her hand to his forehead.

"Bob, you are ill," she said anxiously.

"It's th' docthor he'll be havin' th' night, won't ye, Bob?" Norah pleaded.

"An' a glass av whisky to wanst," added Patrick. "Norah, run away an'—"

"No. I want nothing," Bob said, in a tone that was not to be gainsaid, and passed up to his room.

"Let him alone for a while, mother," Kathleen said. "We can't help him." And she turned away to hide her tears, tears that she could not share the sorrow of a man who had crushed the romance out of her life.

In his room Bob threw himself wearily into a chair by his desk and brooded hopelessly. He went over and over the events of the past few weeks, listening again and again to Paul's bitter words of the afternoon. He relentlessly tore at his wounds until they gaped, taking a kind of savage joy in his self-castigation.

"Just one thing more is needed," he said to himself bitterly. "I will get out of his way—out of her way."

He seized a pen and began painfully to write.

Then his eyes fell upon the telephone at his elbow. He dropped the pen and opened the directory. When he had found the number, he closed the book and lay back in his chair, staring at the telephone.

At last he roused himself and savagely jerked the receiver from its hook.

"Highland thirty thirty— Yes.—Is that Highland thirty thirty—will you call Mrs. Gilbert to the telephone?—Robert McAdoo."

There was a long wait, during which all his will was needed to keep him at the telephone.

"This is Mrs. Gilbert," came the answer at last. She need not have named herself; he recognized her voice.

"I am Robert McAdoo."

"Yes, Mr. McAdoo."

"Mrs. Gilbert," the words were forced out painfully. "Mrs. Gilbert, some time ago I called on you about a certain matter. You may remember?"

"I remember."

"At that time I objected to a course of action which you had planned—"

"Which you supposed I had planned, Mr. McAdoo," came the quick correction.

"It makes no difference. In either case, what I said was an unwarranted interference in matters that did not concern me. Are you still there?"

"I am still here."

"I wish to say—" he dragged the words out slowly —"I wish to say, I withdraw my opposition—finally and absolutely."

A pause.

"That is not necessary," Mr. McAdoo.

"I realize that my opposition would not influence you—"

"That is not what I meant—"

"—but I owe it to you and to—to Paul Remington

—to make the withdrawal. I wish to say that I do this of my own free will, not because of any threats made to me. Are you still there, Mrs. Gilbert?"

"Yes."

"There is another matter. I once said a brutal—a contemptible thing to you. You will remember that. I—I had no right to say that to you—no reason."

"You had no right, Mr. McAdoo."

"I—I apologize, Mrs. Gilbert. That is all."

"Mr. McAdoo!"

"Yes?"

"This is generous of you. But there is another thing more important. I have been wondering how to bring it to your attention. Can you hear me plainly? I don't dare to speak very loudly."

"Yes."

"Mr. McAdoo, there is a plot—a shameful trick—it concerns your election—and possibly Mr. Remington—I feel it my duty to warn you—"

"Yes, I know."

"I am sure you can not know of this that I speak of—"

"Yes, Mrs. Gilbert, I know of it. You have done your duty. You may now enjoy watching the plot work out. It will succeed, in my opinion. That is all."

"But, Mr. McAdoo—"

He hung up the receiver and slouched back into his chair. His head throbbed violently. A roar, like the far-away thunder of the sea, was in his ears. He was very tired.

Later, Norah stole into his room. She went to his side and anxiously felt his head and hands.

"Bob, ye're goin' to be mortial sick, I'm afeared," she said pleadingly, "ye'll be gittin' into yer bed now, won't ye, an' be havin' a docther in th' marnin'?"

"Yes, Norah," he agreed dully, too tired to contradict. "Whatever you say."

Impulsively she threw her arms around his neck and drew his head to her ample bosom, as she had received the little runaway waif years before.

"Me poor laad!" she crooned. "Me poor laad!"

Then she kissed him on the forehead, the only time she had ever dared to kiss him since the day of his coming into the family of Flinn, and left him—prone among the ruins of his temple of Self, which he had taken such pains to build.

CHAPTER XIX

THE POSEUR

DURING the last hours of his temptation Paul had no illusions as to what he was about to do or why he wanted to do it.

Deliberately he whipped himself into a passion against Bob. He knew that the deed required of him by Sanger was one against which fair-minded men, seeing only from the outside, could not consistently animadvert. But he felt also that to him it was a dishonor, a treachery against which his better instincts revolted. He resented the stirring of these instincts and, with a natural inconsistency, blamed Bob as the one who had called them into play. Steeping himself in this resentment, he sought to nerve himself to the point where he could defy and override better instinct. He was not fighting against his temptation, but struggling to succumb; knowing that he would do the thing contemptible in his own eyes, but longing anxiously for some additional goad to his resolution; feeling instinctively that there had been no sham or wavering in his friend's loyalty, but praying for some new excuse for anger against that friend; seeing himself clearly always.

"The *poseur* again!" he thought bitterly in the clarity of his vision. "Always the *poseur!* Lacking the strength even for straightforward villainy. I do him a kindness to rid him of me. And even there I lie. It will hurt him—*he* can suffer—and I don't care!"

Then came the conversation in the office, where Bob's proud stoicism, not unlike amused indifference in its outward expression, had lashed Paul into unreasoning, bitter anger. From that moment to yield became hourly easier.

After a sleepless night, he rose late Monday morning. He heaped fresh coal on the grate, coaxing the dying embers into a roaring blaze. Then he spent a few minutes in vigorous exercise with the dumb-bells, followed by a cold shower. After a quick, hard rubdown, he dressed very carefully. The mirror told him that his sleeplessness had left no trace other than the faint shadows under the eyes and a slight pallor that was very becoming. More than ever, it seemed to him, did the face he saw resemble the face he had used to see in the ivory miniature. But the resemblance had ceased to warn!

He went out and, boarding a car, rode down-town to his favorite grill-room, where he sat for more than an hour dawdling languidly over his breakfast. For another hour he tramped the streets listlessly, steering an aimless course through the bustling crowds. A faint, not unpleasant melancholy fell upon him, such as sometimes comes to one who beholds an autumn sunset or the unhappy dénouement of a play. He lingered luxuriously in the mood, tasting its flavor.

"Like the flavor of a rare old wine," thought this connoisseur of sensations. He walked on, sipping the intoxicating draft.

He came to a corner where stood a blue-goggled beggar, industriously turning the crank of a wheezy hand-organ and wearing a placard, "Please Help the Blind." Paul stopped before him.

"You're probably a fraud," he said, thinking aloud. "But so am I. We frauds must help one another. For good luck!" And he dropped a handful of silver change into the beggar's cup. The blind beggar looked wonderingly at him through the blue goggles, as Paul walked away.

His course, without conscious intention, led him to the First National Bank Building. Nor was he conscious of any exercise of will, one way or the other, as he entered the elevator and was whisked to Sanger's offices. Sanger greeted him cordially, with no outward sign of exultation. Paul's only sensations were surprise that it was so easy and matter-of-fact—and somewhat of a disappointment that it was so flat and tasteless—this treachery upon which he had brooded so forebodingly. He read the formal statement twice before signing; he could not realize that it meant the end of six years' friendship, the beginning of a new scheme of existence for him. Only when the notary administered the oath, did he feel a qualm. A slight shiver passed over him. Then he laughed uncertainly. He drew a deep breath, of relief—he thought—that it was over. The melancholy returned.

His next stop was at a telephone booth, where he called up the Sanger home. In response to his inquiries, Eleanor's maid informed him that madam was not at home. She had gone down-town in the automobile. When did madam expect to be at home? Madam had left word that she would not be at home until very late in the afternoon, intending to lunch down-town. Madam had signified her intention of going to a certain department store to do some shopping.

Paul hung up the receiver, and steered a straight course for the department store designated. With a sigh of relief he espied the big, hooded automobile standing before the entrance to the store. The chauffeur was fussily examining the machine. Paul stopped and abstractedly watched him. The latter touched his hat, importantly continuing his labors, which seemed to be superfluous. Paul sat in the machine and waited, smoking dreamily. An hour later he heard a surprised,

"What are *you* doing here?"

He turned quickly, his eyes lighting up warmly, "Waiting for you."

She laughed. "I was so vain as to guess that. Are you going somewhere? Perhaps we can set you down there?"

"Yes," he said with a proprietary air, "I'm going to luncheon. And you are coming with me."

"Is that an invitation? Then I—accept. I'll let you into a secret. I have been wretchedly lonely all morning. I came shopping just to escape it. And I was dreading the prospect of an afternoon alone in that big, empty house."

"Then I'm twice glad I waited."

He opened the door and they both entered the car. James cranked and deftly dodged through the crowded thoroughfares toward the restaurant Paul had chosen.

Within the car they sat in a frank, intimate silence. Paul, looking gravely out of the window, evinced an unusual disinclination to talk, and Eleanor, wondering whether she had been wise to accept his invitation, was glad enough to humor his mood. Her coming had not dissipated the melancholy that enveloped him; she merely added a sort of mellow sweetness that made the flavor exquisitely delicious to him. An agreeable physical languor overspread him. His eyes, bent on the crowded sidewalks, saw nothing.

He turned dreamily to her.

"You shouldn't be lonely," he said in the hushed tone one would use at a death-bed, "since you have for company—you."

"I find myself sorry company sometimes," she answered with an attempt at brightness.

His beautiful woman's mouth curved in a dreamy smile. "It is company worth any sacrifice to win."

"How little you know me!" she replied, laughing at the triteness of the remark.

He made as if to speak, but desisted, and turned to stare again out of the window.

When the car came to a stop before the restaurant, they alighted and went in. The head waiter, with the obsequiousness of one who before then had tasted the generosity of this particular patron, led the way to a small table in a secluded corner of the room. When he had given his order, Paul, with her permission, lighting a cigarette, leaned back in his chair and inhaled the smoke slowly. A hidden string band droned out some soft, sentimental music. The voices of other diners rose in a subdued murmur. A potted hyacinth on the table exuded its strong, sweet odor which, mingling with the aroma of his tobacco, came soothingly to his nostrils. Eleanor, at loss to account for his new vagary and rendered a little uneasy by it, tried to break in on it by making conversation. He gave vague, irrelevant answers. The waiter served their luncheon. Paul made only a pretense of eating.

"You're eating hardly anything," she said. "Aren't you well?"

For answer he pointed to her own plate, hardly touched.

"I had a very late breakfast," she explained.

"So had I. Hush!" he almost whispered. "Let us not talk."

With a half-contemptuous shrug of her shoulders she gave over the attempt to disturb him. She wondered how she could ever have deceived herself into the belief that she could love or that she wanted to love him.

"It was pity only," she thought. "Always pity."

Paul abandoned even the pretense of eating, watching the wavering smoke of his cigarette and steeping himself luxuriously in his mood. But the bitter-sweet melancholy grew deeper. And gradually the sweetness of its flavor was lost, leaving only the bitterness; it sat upon him heavily, oppressively. He had drunk too deeply of his draft. A vague, disturbing fear crept into his heart. He stirred uneasily, lowering his eyes to meet hers. He looked at her long and steadily. In that look it was given him to know that she would never grant him what he asked of her; the fair hope, inspired by Sanger's words, died within him.

"Eleanor, Eleanor!" he cried, softly pleading. "It isn't true?"

"What isn't true?" she asked, though she knew the answer.

"That you will never love me?" he whispered tremulously.

She put out her hand uncertainly, as though she would lighten the blow.

"No," she said pityingly. "I can never love you as you wish."

He caught her hand in his own. In their secluded corner they were safe from observation, though neither thought of that.

"Ah! dear, don't say that! You don't know how great my love for you is. It is the one reality in my life. You remember what I told you, how I knew you would come into my life some day? That was true. I have always loved you, even before I saw you. And I always shall love you—I will make up to you what suffering has taken out of your life—"

Tears came to her eyes. "Paul," she said sadly, "it hurts me to tell you—"

"Don't! I'm willing to wait—even unto death—to win from you one thousandth of what I give you. My love isn't a thing of the moment, but of all time. I don't ask you to love me now, only not to send me away for ever. I'll try so hard to please you, to cast out of my life everything that is inconsistent with my love—even to break with the man who has stood between us—"

"No, no!" she cried involuntarily, her fingers tightening around his hand. "You mustn't desert him! It wouldn't be honorable—"

"Ah! there is neither honor nor shame, right nor wrong, kindness nor cruelty, loyalty nor treachery—only you—always, supreme!"

She drew her hand sharply from his clasp. "Romantic phrases!" she said scornfully. "There are suffering and sin and remorse, there would be his unhappiness and the knowledge that we had caused it. Do you think I could be so mean, so little, as to seek happiness at that price?"

"I don't understand," he said, passing his hand across his brow in bewilderment. "You said yourself, once—"

"Ah! yes," she answered, softening. "I have no right to be angry with you, since it was I who first suggested it to you. That is my shame. Believe me, what I said then was spoken in a miserable selfishness far worse than I have accused him of. I had no right to say it. I see that now. And I see my act in all its contemptible unwomanliness."

"I don't understand—"

"What you ask is impossible," she went on sadly. "But even if I could care for you, I couldn't accept happiness at the sacrifice of a man who cares for you so deeply, who has done so much for you."

He smiled bitterly. "There is something *you* don't understand. I seem to have praised him to better effect than I thought. But my eyes, too, have been opened. He has been the first to sacrifice me. You probably don't know that your brother offered to help him elect me governor, but was refused. My friend refused to sacrifice a policy for my sake."

"He hasn't told you?"

"Your brother has told me—"

"I mean, Mr. McAdoo hasn't told you that he went to the capital and agreed finally to join John Dunmeade on the condition that they support you for governor next year?"

Paul stared at her, bewildered, stunned. "He did that?" he asked slowly, incredulously.

"Yes."

His arms fell limply to his side. For some minutes he sat motionless. When he looked up again, his handsome face was marred by a sneer.

"You pleading for him! You seem to have executed the *volte face*."

She flushed. "I have no right to resent that. The one thing a woman asks of a man is loyalty. She should be the last to seek to turn it away from another. That I have done so is my shame."

He shook his head in perplexity. "You have changed since you went away."

"I've found out that the world wasn't created merely for my pleasure," she answered quietly.

"After all," he continued, after a minute's pause, during which he studied her intently, "the governorship is a little thing. The thing in which he has been falsest was in coming between us. If he hadn't done that, you could have loved me. That Sunday—when you sang—you almost cared for me. And you would have let yourself love me—had it not been for him. Even now you wouldn't refuse me finally—were it not for his opposition. I realize—something tells me—it is useless to plead with you. But he and I have come to the end."

She hesitated, flushing again at the thought that she was defending a man who despised her.

"You're mistaken," she said gently. "That isn't my entire reason. He has told me that he no longer objects. He proves his friendship by that."

Again Paul fell back limply in his chair. "*He—has—told—you*—" he gasped. "When?"

"Saturday night—over the telephone."

"It was too late—too late!"

The music of the string band and the voices of the other diners receded, he lost sense even of the presence of the woman before him. He felt miserably alone. Life had dealt hardly by him, he thought bitterly; there was no hint of self-blame in his bitterness. His heart contracted in a spasm of exquisite sorrow. Wealth, career, fame, happiness, all things which he had made his objectives seemed in a moment to have lost their sweetness. Thenceforth nothing was left to him but to carry the burden which life had put upon him. He could see a pathetic picture of himself plodding, plodding, plodding wearily around a dusty circle that led nowhere, bending under the cruel burden, the burden growing heavier at every step, until at last he broke under it and sank to rise no more. It was all very sad and beautiful. Tears of self-pity stood in his eyes.

"The end of the dream!" he sighed. "It was too good to be true. Nothing remains but a memory—the deathless memory of what might have been." Even in his bitterness he could turn his pretty phrase.

Tears were in her eyes, too. "You'll forget. I'm not worth even a memory."

He shook his head, smiling sadly. He clung lovingly to the picture of the arid, dusty circle and the weary, heavy-laden plodder; perhaps, when at last he sank, she would be there to bear witness to his beautiful constancy—she might even shed a regretful tear over the fallen form.

I think that in that moment her sorrow was more genuine than his. She could with difficulty preserve the steadiness of her voice, as she spoke.

"I have no right to ask you anything. I haven't been fair with you. But I am fair with you now—I'm trying to atone for my selfishness—when I say, go back to him and forget me. You are all he cares for, and he is far more worthy of your love than I am. You will find your true happiness working with him and John Dunmeade. And I—I will go away where you can both forget me and I can no longer stand between you. I, not he, have been the marplot."

"It's too late," he said listlessly. "He and I have parted for ever."

"It is never too late to atone for a fault. Be generous to me, if not to him," she pleaded anxiously.

The quality of his smile changed. "To you? What is he to you?"

"He is a man who despises me—justly," she answered steadily. "He is a man whom my brother is cruelly seeking to destroy and to whom I have carelessly, selfishly, done the greatest injury one can do to another. Paul, I know how my brother is tempting you. You will not do what he wants, please say you will not. See, I'm putting aside my woman's pride to plead for a man who hates me. Because if you do what Henry wants, I must always feel that the crime is mine."

"It's too late! It's done!"

"Paul!"

A man at the next table turned sharply, hearing the low, gasping cry. He looked away again quickly. The cry pierced even Paul's self-pity. He saw her face go death-white; a piteous, stricken look crept into her eyes. An unbelievable, stunning thought stirred in his heart.

"Do you mean that you—"

The sadly beautiful picture faded. The pity of self—of the man upon whom circumstance had played so hardly—died. He saw his deed in all its shamefulness, its nakedness of defense. The sense of unreality fell from him. He saw the misery he had wrought. . . .

"What have I done?"

"What have we done?"

Mechanically he fumbled for a bill and threw it on the table. He rose from his seat. As mechanically, she followed him out of the restaurant into the street.

He gave her one long look, in which she saw written all his shame. Then, without a word, he turned and left her. She watched him, until his figure was lost in the crowd.

CHAPTER XX

SANGER'S CARD

THE big anteroom of the Republican headquarters was filled by an excited, noisy crowd; it was the afternoon before election day. No one seemed able to stand in one spot for two consecutive minutes; no one thought of sitting. All smoked and spit incessantly. Every one talked as loudly as possible. Disjointed scraps of conversation mingled oddly:

"Sure to win, it's a cinch." "Ten to three McAdoo wins, is best odds." "They say Larkin's thrown up the sponge." "Old man's sick, I hear." "Twentieth'll go for Larkin, though." "Hell! don't be a Jew—even money McAdoo wins by ten thousand." "Sick, nothin'! Couldn't kill McAdoo with dynamite." "The Fourth'll make the Twentieth look like thirty cents, when the majorities come in." "Tom Haggin told me so himself." "Five to ten he wins by more than ten thousand." "Where in hell does Larkin's money come from—that's what *I'd* like to know." "Typhoid, Haggin says the doctor says." "Told the doctor to go to the devil and came down-town." "Haven't seen much of MacPherson this campaign." "O, Mack's a dead one an' knows it." "That's like the old man—nothin' feazes him, you bet."

And so on during the afternoon, the crowd shifting nervously, stranger addressing stranger in the political freemasonry, new-comers taking the places of those who left.

Late in the afternoon a bomb was exploded in the midst of the crowd.

A man, breathless and red-faced, burst into the room. He rushed to the group nearest the door.

"Remington's thrown McAdoo down!" he shouted hoarsely.

"Aw, hell!" was the derisive answer.

"I tell you—"

"*Chronicle!* Extry! Great s'nsashun! All 'bout Remington's exposher!"

A strident-voiced newsboy ran into the room, waving a paper around his head. Great red letters flared on the sheet. There was an instant scramble to reach him, men shoving one another and snatching papers that others had paid for. In a twinkling the supply was exhausted and the newsboy ran out to replenish. He left behind him a dazed, stricken crowd. Three or four men gathered around each newspaper, over one another's shoulders straining to read the news. It was plain enough—a few lines of bold type, leaded out for sake of prominence—the affidavit of Paul Remington setting forth Robert McAdoo's confession to the use of bribery in winning his nomination. The news once read, papers fell from nerveless hands. Men stared at one another with scared, uncomprehending eyes. An overwhelming personal calamity seemed to have fallen on every one. Even the hangers-on felt it. All stood in painful, awkward silence.

The silence was broken by a faltering cry. "It's—

it's a damned lie!" The speaker was a young man—new to politics—who had met Bob during the campaign and had become one of the big man's most ardent followers. He was an earnest young man who cherished high ideals of civic duty and purity.

"I won't believe it," he repeated, raising his voice appealingly. "It's all a lie!"

An uneasy murmur rose. Somehow no one could deny the affidavit.

Just then Haggin came through one of the rear doors, coatless, hat shoved back, a cold cigar sticking at an aggressive angle from his mouth.

"What's the matter with you guys?" he demanded sharply. "That's the noisest silence I ever heard."

One of them handed to him a paper. He read slowly.

"My God!" he gasped, stunned as were the others. "My God!"

One of the petty gamblers was the first to recover self-possession.

"Guess that changes the odds," he laughed harshly. "Three to ten on Larkin! No? Make it four to ten! Five to—"

Suddenly Haggin whirled on the gambler. His big fist shot out and sent the gambler crashing to the floor. Haggin did not give a second glance to the fallen man. He wrung his hands distractedly, as does a woman in trouble.

"My God!" he groaned again, mumbling the words uncertainly. "I dunno what to do. He's a sick man—doctor said typhoid—got out o' bed to come downtown—he's comin' here *now*—don't let him know. an'—" His voice rose in a hoarse bellow. "God curse Remington for a dirty traitor!"

Haggin's oath was echoed by a quick, indistinct murmur. They were men, most of them, to whom Deity was merely a word. They were in the habit of using the name of God carelessly, frankly, as a metaphor to express any emotion. The murmur was a confused medley of coarse blasphemies.

A man near the door cursed sickeningly. *"He's* coming!" The murmur ceased instantly.

A carriage drew up before the ramshackle building. Out of it stepped Bob McAdoo—the man who never before had needed a vehicle for his comings and goings. He was a very sick man; every one saw that. A two days' old stubble of beard accentuated the haggardness of his face. The eyes glittered glassily. On his sunken cheeks glowed two bright red spots. His closely clenched lips—a narrow red line—showed that only will kept him up. As he passed from the carriage, fretfully waving aside the driver who had sprung down to assist him, he almost tottered. The hand that reached for the door-knob trembled visibly. Curiously enough, no one thought to open the door for him; all stood watching him in a sort of frightened fascination, as though they saw a brother passing to his execution. The earnest young man who cherished civic ideals felt a sudden physical nausea; he wanted to run away, but could not. They all stepped back, leaving a narrow aisle through which Bob might pass.

He opened the door and passed slowly along the narrow aisle, nodding mechanically. At the end of the aisle he came face to face with Haggin and the bleeding gambler. Then the strange silence struck in on him. He raised his head sharply, the lips parting a little.

"What is it?" he said. His voice was high pitched and querulous.

From the street came the strident voice of the newsboy. He was too far away for his words to be distinguished, but he was coming rapidly nearer.

"For Christ's sake! stop that newsie," a man exclaimed involuntarily.

"Shut up, you fool!" another answered gruffly, by his words accomplishing the very result he hoped to avert.

"What is it? Why stop the newsie?" The tone was still sharp and querulous.

The young man who cherished ideals, standing before Bob, sought to hide his paper behind his back. The movement caught Bob's attention. Just before the paper disappeared behind the young man's back, he saw in big, flaring, red letters, "Reming—"

He held out his hand. "Give me that paper."

The young man stared at him mutely, a scared look coming into his eyes.

"Give me that paper!" Bob repeated fiercely. He caught the young man by the shoulder, swung him around roughly and seized the paper.

Then he unfolded it and read. The crowd looked on in dumb discomfort; somehow every one present found himself suffering horribly. Even the gambler forgot to mop his bleeding nose.

As he saw the flaring head-line, Bob felt his heart contract convulsively. There was a sudden sharp throb in his brain and then a strange numbness spread through him. He read through the affidavit without being able to comprehend what it meant—there, in its bold type, it seemed so impersonal, so much the thing which he was used to see in the newspapers, that he could not realize that it was Paul's, his friend's, public disavowal of him. He read it a second time, and still it did not seem real; the numbness persisted. He tried to read it for the third time—but he could not keep his mind on the bold letters—the words made no sense at all. That tendency of his mind which had troubled him all through the day—to wander away from the matter at hand—asserted itself more positively than ever. A vague, meaningless smile twisted his lips, though his brow contracted petulantly. He looked at the young man.

"What does it mean?" His hand passed before his eyes. "I—I don't understand."

The young man sobbed aloud.

"It isn't true, Mr. McAdoo? Say it isn't true."

Bob looked at him, the smile still playing about his mouth.

"Is it bad?" The querulousness was gone. The voice was tired and gentle. "Then it's true—whatever it is."

The crowd stood stupidly mute. The young man sobbed again. He caught one of Bob's hands in both his own.

"I don't care if it is true," he said brokenly. "I'll stand by you." He turned to face the others and through unshamed tears looked defiance at them. They stirred uneasily. A mutter of approval arose.

Bob exerted all his will to bring back his straying mind to the thing before him, to realize what it was that made these men stand around him in stupid silence. . . . Irrelevant scenes of his life seemed determined to recall themselves. He was in the mills, amid the incessant roar of the machinery. . . . Then he faced a big, strong man whose arms shot back and forth with the speed and force of piston rods, landing blows that made his body ache all over. . . .

The paper had fallen from his hands. He was standing rigidly upright, his head thrown back, his feverish, glittering eyes taking no account of the present. Haggin took a step forward and laid his hand on Bob's shoulder.

"Bob," he said, and no one wondered then at the gentleness in the old prize-fighter's voice. "Ye're sick. Let's go home, Bob."

Bob started. He looked at Haggin with a puzzled, childish frown.

"Eh, Tom? I came to see you about something—I forget what. It was something—I'm always forgetting to-day—Tom, let MacPherson go to thunder, and you and I'll go home."

Haggin—still coatless, hat shoved back, the cold cigar mechanically held by the clenched teeth—took one of Bob's arms, the earnest young man caught the other. Together they half-led, half-supported him to the carriage. Then they got in with him and drove away.

There was a rustle, as the men in the crowd changed their attitudes stiffly. Then some one laughed unpleasantly.

"Don't!" another rebuked him complainingly. "Don't laugh. I feel like I'd just seen a man hung."

The speaker elbowed his way to the door and passed out into the noisy streets. The rest followed him, leaving the headquarters silent and deserted by all but the caretaker.

In the carriage Haggin and the young man took the front seat, carefully helping Bob to the other. He partly sat, partly reclined in the corner, his head dropping loosely forward until the chin almost rested on his chest, his eyelids partly closed over the glittering, staring balls.

Sunday morning Norah Flinn had found him dozing fitfully over his desk. He had obeyed her commands listlessly and gone to bed. All day he had lain there alone—having forbidden the others to minister to him—tossing restlessly from side to side, trying to fall asleep. But pains in his abdomen and back and head had effectually warded off sleep. Wild, disconnected thoughts had coursed tumultuously through his mind. Detached scenes from his life—seeming sinister enough, some of them!—had flashed before him. In the evening Kathleen had firmly defied his orders and had called a doctor. The latter, after a short examination, had declared that his patient was in for an attack of typhoid fever.

Through that night Bob slept but little. And by that time he was glad to be awake; for when he slept, horrible, racking dreams tormented him. He chafed over the interminable night, longing for daylight to come and dispel the sense of unreality that hung oppressively over him. When the doctor came late next morning, he found his patient out of bed and laboriously dressing. The doctor protested, calling it utter madness. Bob grimly continued his preparations to go down-stairs. The doctor made as if to use force to put him back into bed. Bob suddenly turned on him, his eyes gleaming hotly and his lips drawn back wolfishly, and snarled, "You get out of here, d'ye see?" He drew back his arm as if to strike.

The doctor, with a gesture of despair, ceased to protest, warning Bob, however, of the danger of going out—a warning that was unheeded. But when the sick man started down-stairs, he could hardly realize that he was himself, so weak and unsteady were his great limbs. Yielding perforce so much to his illness, he telephoned for a carriage to take him to his office. For most of the day he sat there, going over and over the details of the morrow's plans. He had need of all his will power, too, to keep his mind fixed on the work before him. At last, late in the afternoon, he discovered some matter which he thought needed correction, a trifling detail but one which in his morbid mental condition he exaggerated into fatal proportions. He went down to his carriage and was borne to the headquarters.

There the news of Paul's defection had greeted him. As his eyes had fallen on the glaring red head-lines, all the strength of will that had supported his tired, aching body through the day and exercised uncertain control over his mind, had suddenly given way.

Now he sat in his carriage, passively yielding to his sickness, his body swaying limply as the vehicle bumped over rough places in the streets, strange, jumbled fancies racing madly through his mind.

Haggin and the young man leaned forward anxiously, ready to catch Bob if the jolting of the carriage should throw him off balance. When they were half way home, Haggin ordered the driver to stop.

"Git out," he commanded the young man, "an' 'phone fer a doctor to be at his house—quick, see?"

When the carriage resumed its journey, the old saloon-keeper took a seat beside Bob and awkwardly put a steadying arm around his liege's shoulders. He noticed that Bob's lips were moving.

"What is it?" Haggin inquired, bending over. "I can't hear ye, Bob. Can't ye speak louder?"

Bob's eyes opened slowly. He stared at his companion unrecognizingly. He began to mutter. Haggin could catch only snatches of it. Delirium had gripped Bob.

". . . It's the face of the little newsie, I can't get it out of my sight. . . . They'll beat me in the end. . . . The miracle won't come, Kathleen. . . . Beaten by a woman. . . . I'll get out of your way, I tell you. . . . I have nothing to say. . . . You've said it all, Paul. . . . This is the end. . . ."

Haggin blasphemed tearfully to the driver. *"Can't* you drive faster?"

When the carriage stopped before Bob's house, neighbors at their windows were treated to the strange spectacle of a big, fat saloon-keeper—coatless, hat shoved back, teeth clutching a cold cigar—dragging the city's boss and candidate for its mayoralty out of the carriage toward the house, where at the open door two white-faced women waited.

While it was still gasping over the news of Paul Remington's defection and disclosure, word went out to the city that night that Bob McAdoo had been stricken down by a serious sickness.

BOOK THREE

THE MOULDER

CHAPTER I

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

IN the days that followed, while Bob McAdoo lay battling with death, his city learned what a hold he had taken on its heart. Perhaps in its newly discovered love it unduly magnified his finer qualities; perhaps it too generously overlooked the sinister episodes in his career—but that is the habit of the human heart, when its sympathy and affection have been touched. A pall of gloomy anxiety hung over the city. His death had suddenly come to mean an irreparable loss, his recovery the thing most to be desired.

The newspapers daily gave minute reports of the progress of the disease. In the street-cars men read first the account from his sick-room. It was the first question they asked each other when they met in street and corridor: "What is the latest word from McAdoo?" And when the discouraging word was spoken, they shook their heads gravely. Prayers for his recovery were offered in the churches. As his condition grew worse, the newspapers—even those owned by his enemies—hung out hourly bulletins. Before these bulletins gathered great solemn crowds. But once before in the city's history had such crowds assembled to watch the struggle between life and death—a few years back, when the nation's president, struck down by an assassin's bullet, was drifting into the Valley of Shadows. The Steel City remembered that former time and drew a parallel. It cursed the man whose cruel blow, as the city believed, had struck down Bob McAdoo.

There came a day when the news offered no hope. He had suffered two hemorrhages in quick succession. His temperature had fallen far below normal. His heart was almost pulseless. Life was barely flickering. He could live but a few hours, read the doctors' bulletins. Before the newspaper offices the great crowds waited silently, stopping traffic in the streets, forgetting hunger, far into the night—sadly waiting for the end. In one of the theaters, at the end of the first act, the latest bulletin was read. Almost with one accord the audience rose and solemnly filed out into the streets to join the waiting crowds.

Two men voiced the sentiments of all:

"Wish I'd voted for him," one said huskily.

His neighbor, a stranger, turned on him fiercely. "There's thousands more wishing that to-night. I'm glad I did. It's the finest thing I've ever done. He's the best we've got and—" He stopped to gulp down the lump in his throat. He was the earnest young man who cherished ideals of civic duty.

That night a woman, who had braved the dark streets alone and on foot, tapped lightly at the door of McAdoo's home. The door was opened and softly closed behind her by a maid who stood on guard. The woman asked to see Miss Flinn; the maid did not think it possible, for Miss Flinn was in the sick-room. But something in the pleading eyes of the woman moved the girl, and she showed the visitor into the little parlor and went up-stairs with the message. Looking across the hall into the library, the visitor saw a strange group—John Dunmeade, governor of the state, Patrick Flinn, ex-policeman, and Tom Haggin, ex-pugilist and saloon-keeper—sitting silent together in a common grief.

There was a rustle of skirts along the hall and then not Kathleen but Mrs. Dunmeade entered the parlor. She looked at the visitor in amazement.

"Eleanor, dear!"

"Katherine!"

And the two women were in each other's arms.

"Is he—?" Eleanor began. She could not complete the question.

"The doctors say so," Mrs. Dunmeade answered quietly.

Eleanor disengaged herself from the embrace.

"Can I see Kathleen Flinn a minute?"

Mrs. Dunmeade shook her head. "I fear not, Eleanor. She is with him. And they are expecting any minute—"

"Ah! don't say that!—But, please, Katherine, won't you see?" Eleanor pleaded. "I must speak to her. I won't take but a moment. I must speak to her before he—before he—" She stopped again.

"I'll ask her." And Mrs. Dunmeade went up-stairs.

A few minutes later Kathleen Flinn entered—a new Kathleen, whose face was hard and stern. She looked at Eleanor coldly.

Before Kathleen's contempt, Eleanor's eyes quailed. But quickly she raised them again.

"Miss Flinn," she said, speaking haltingly, "I won't keep you long. I came—it's about that affidavit. I want to say it was all my fault. It was my brother's scheme—I didn't know about it until it was too late. But it would never have been done, if I hadn't first tempted Paul to leave—him. And I wanted—to say this—I can't to him, but you're nearest to him. And I—can't you see?—I *had* to make my acknowledgment before—" She stopped, looking pleadingly at Kathleen.

"We knew it," Kathleen said, still coldly, cruelly putting a slight emphasis on the "we."

Eleanor began again, miserably. "I didn't know what my brother was scheming. And I did it thoughtlessly—though that's no excuse—it was utterly contemptible. When I found out—Saturday night I tried to warn Mr.—*him*—over the telephone—but he wouldn't listen. And Monday I tried to dissuade Paul from doing it—but it was too late.—I was so helpless—so helpless. But that doesn't excuse me, either. I don't expect you to forgive me—*he* couldn't. I can't forgive myself. But I had to tell you that I know what I did—and that all my life I shall have my punishment. It—it's all I can do. Thank you for listening to me. And don't let me keep you from him."

Kathleen's face was not cold now. The thing in Eleanor's eyes that had moved the servant touched Kathleen, too. And it was not a time to cherish anger or—as Eleanor had proved—woman's pride. She took a step forward and looked closely into the younger woman's eyes.

"You—you must care something for—" she pointed upward—"for him—or you *couldn't* have come."

A sob was the only answer.

"You poor girl!" she murmured, and drew Eleanor to her. And on Kathleen's shoulder the young woman wept softly.

Soon Kathleen said, "Would you like to see him?"

"Yes."

Together they went up-stairs to the room where Bob McAdoo faced death. Eleanor knew that she would remember the scene always—for her punishment, she thought. In a corner sat Norah Flinn, her hands primly folded in her lap, her eyes downcast. Beside her, one hand resting gently on the old woman's shoulder, stood Mrs. Dunmeade. The uniformed nurse, a strong, capable-looking woman, was standing beside a small table, noiselessly arranging bottles and glasses; among the medical paraphernalia stood a vase of fresh cut flowers. Two doctors, wearing their cold, professional air, stood at the foot of the bed. A third sat by the bedside, holding the wrist of the sick man; occasionally he leaned over to place his stethoscope above the patient's heart.

A folded newspaper had been stuck in the chandelier to shade the face of the patient. The shadow accentuated the waxen pallor of his face. His head was shaven, a rough beard had grown out, the pinched features were big and bony and ugly. The sheet was drawn up to his chin, leaving visible only the head and the arm whose wrist the doctor held. He might have been already dead, so motionless was he.

Eleanor gave him one long look. She could not repress a sob. The doctor at the bedside looked up with a frown. Then she turned away and crept blindly from the room. Kathleen compassionately followed her, and led her into a room across the hall. Eleanor sank into a chair and sobbed unrestrainedly.

"It's horrible!" she moaned. "He was so strong."

"My poor girl!" Kathleen murmured soothingly.

Eleanor looked up wanly. "Why are you so kind to me? When I have deserved so little?"

"Because," Kathleen answered softly, "I think I understand. You condemn yourself too harshly—as I did. Forgive me."

Then she added. "Do you care to wait here? You are welcome."

"If I may."

And Kathleen left her alone.

Eleanor lay back in her chair; subconsciously she took in the details of this room, too: the simple furniture, the walls bare of all ornament save books—rows and rows of books, covering the walls half way to the ceiling—the businesslike desk with its neat, orderly piles of papers and books, its telephone—the room of a man who worked. Mechanically fingering a pile of unopened letters lying on the desk, beside which she sat, she caught the address of the one on top, "Robert McAdoo." It was his room! . . . Here the big, lonely man, shut off from his fellows, had in anticipation fought out the battle whose issue so vitally concerned his fellows. Here, too, he must have fought those bitter inner battles which all strong men have to face. Here, perhaps, with hatred and contempt, he had thought of her. Here—she saw the telephone—he had beaten down his pride and humbled himself before her whose idle, selfish vanity had brought such sorrow to him. . . . And now he must die.

"Ah! no!" her heart protested. "It can't be true. He was so strong. He will beat back death, as he has beaten all his enemies. He will not die!"

And as the night wore away and he still lingered, her hope became faith.

And the faith was justified. The Force had further use for Robert McAdoo.

Toward morning his heart action became perceptibly stronger and his temperature began to rise gradually. Two of the doctors left, first shaking hands with all in the room and congratulating them with an air that said, "Congratulate us!" The morning newspapers carried the good news out to the city.

It was Kathleen who went in to tell Eleanor, saying simply,

"He will live."

And Eleanor smiled. "I have known it."

"You put us to shame," Kathleen said. "We have had too little faith. Won't you lie down and get some rest? You are tired."

Eleanor pointed to the window. "No, it is morning now and I can go home. You should rest, yourself. And," she added simply, "I can never forget your generosity to me."

Kathleen pressed her hand gently. "I owed it to you for having misjudged you—yes, I did. But I want you to promise me one thing. Will you?"

"Yes."

"When he has recovered, I want you to come to him and tell him what you told me."

Eleanor did not answer at once. When she did, her voice was quiet.

"Yes. But," she added in a frightened tone, "please never tell him that I was here to-night." The crisis past, the woman in her reasserted itself.

"I understand—dear."

Walking wearily homeward in the gray morning, Eleanor thought:

"I will make my acknowledgment to him—and then I will go away—for ever."

And "for ever" seemed a long, dreary time, indeed!

One day, when his strength was beginning to creep back into his body, Kathleen came to his bedside.

"You haven't asked how the election came out," she said.

He smiled wearily. "I'd forgotten. I lost, didn't I?"

"Lost!" Kathleen laughed proudly. "No, indeed! You *won*—and by nearly ten thousand. Aren't they the dear, good people?"

And it was true. Sanger had miscalculated. Paul's declaration had been received by many with the skepticism with which eleventh-hour charges generally are received. Others had seen only the treachery in Paul's deed, and had become even more set in their determination to vote for McAdoo. Thousands had defiantly said that they did not care, and had been ready to find excuses for the bribing of the delegates. And the news of his collapse and his critical condition, which Haggin had taken care to disseminate through the city early on the morning of election day, had been an unanswerable appeal to sympathy.

But Bob heard the news apathetically. For a long time he lay with closed eyes, making no comment. When he opened his eyes again, he whispered listlessly:

"I don't seem to care. I almost wish I had lost. Then I shouldn't have to go on with the fighting. I wonder why they did it?"

"Don't you know?"

"What they charged was true. The delegates were bribed. They *ought* to have repudiated me."

"Ah!" Kathleen answered proudly, "but they love you!"

He shook his head wearily. "It was because they didn't realize." He turned his face away, and Kathleen, remembering the doctor's orders not to let him talk much, said no more.

Another day—it was the first time he was allowed to sit up in bed—when the nurse had gone out of the room for a few minutes, he began the conversation himself.

"Kathleen—" he began abruptly, then stopped.

"Yes?"

"I was delirious, wasn't I?"

"You were."

"I—I talked a good deal?"

"Almost continuously."

"And you learned—everything?"

"Many things."

"About—about Mrs. Gilbert?"

"Yes."

He had been looking steadily into space. Now he turned to meet her gaze.

"Even what a cowardly brute I was to her at the Dunmeades'?" A faint flush came to his sunken cheeks.

"Yes, even that," she answered steadily.

His next question came after a long pause.

"A woman couldn't forgive that, could she, Kathleen?"

"Not many women, I think."

His voice became husky. "I've been thinking of that a good deal. I—I'd like to make that up to her, if I could, Kathleen."

"You may have the chance some day." Long afterward, thinking over this scene, he seemed to remember that her voice was very tired; he supposed it was because the strain of the watching had been too much for her.

And he thought of many things besides his relation to Eleanor Gilbert.

All his life long Bob had gone driving steadily ahead with little time for self-study. Now he welcomed the weeks of inaction following his fever. He needed the time to become acquainted with himself and readjust his life. It was like meeting and learning to know a complete stranger.

Haggin was a daily visitor; and often for hours he and Bob and Kathleen sat chatting of the future—always of the future. One day Haggin told Bob how the people of their city had received the news of his illness. Bob said nothing then. But long after Haggin had gone, he sat thoughtfully looking out of his window pondering what the saloon-keeper had told him. Kathleen, who had remained in the room, bent silently over her sewing; she guessed a little of what was passing through his mind.

He had never been of those politicians who privately affect to hold in contempt the people upon whom they play. And when Haggin, in his rough way, told him of the sorrow they had shown for his sickness, Bob felt his heart suddenly expand in a deep, strong affection for them. They were *his* people!—his, not because his machine had whipped them into submission, but because he, though unworthy, lived in their hearts.

He knew his city. He knew that within its limits were hundreds of thousands of men and women who toiled ceaselessly, unquestioningly, that they might wring out a bare existence for themselves and their children, happy if at the end they might die in their own beds and see their sons and daughters self-dependent; leaving to the next generation the heritage of the same struggle and the same hope. And he knew that over the land were a hundred million others like those of his city—all struggling always, producing always, giving to humanity the equivalent for the right and means to live, giving *more* than the equivalent, giving more and better than they received from the world. A brave, patient, hard-working, faithful, deserving people these—pity the man who could not feel a thrill of pride that he was one of them! Bob suddenly knew that love of one's people is a distinct, definite, overmastering emotion which exalts a man and dwarfs his petty self.

Happy they were in the main, these his people, with the happiness that tired bodies and peaceful consciences bring. But he knew that there was another side to the picture, a side upon which he had looked so often and so dispassionately that every tragic detail was ineffaceably printed upon his mind and the meaning of every detail fully realized. He knew that in the unsightly, foul-smelling tenement districts of his city dwelt tens of thousands of dull-eyed, hard-faced men and women—whole families living, sleeping and eating—when they could—in squalid rooms where disease was bred and death lurked and suffering abode always. He knew of other thousands, sturdy, brave men who worked continuously and thought of death with anguish, knowing that their taking away meant starvation to wives and babes; for to those who labor the hardest our "prosperity" brings no surplus. He knew of the great "common" people of the land, whose lives are being worn out in the effort to produce far more than they consume, at the end having nothing but the necessity for increased, harder effort; looking about them in dazed wonder and plaintively demanding, "Why is it that we can not rest? Why have we nothing? Whither has it gone—that which we have created?"

Whither had it gone? He knew the answer. It gloomed solemnly down at him from million-dollar palaces, honked hoarsely through the streets from costly imported automobiles, flashed brilliantly from the bejeweled fingers of wife and courtezan, kept gleaming necks and shoulders warm in the face of shivering poverty, gurgled in goblets of precious vintages, raced panting under the wire. Above all, he read the answer in the terrific power of the modern feudal system—concentrated wealth—whose machinery was slowly crunching, crunching, crunching his people into helpless subjection. From a race of men who were producers had sprung a generation of men whom the world called "financiers"—who gave no equivalent to humanity for what they wrung out of humanity. They reared magnificent memorial churches, did these "financiers," endowed universities, erected libraries, founded scientific institutions—bearing their own names in high, ornate letters that posterity might read and hold the donors in loving remembrance; they gave to charity as did the Pharisee, conspicuously, with a fanfare of trumpets, amid the plaudits of a hired chorus, and exchanged among themselves such greetings: "My brother in the great work of distributing surplus wealth, I clasp your hand. We are doing the work of God." But the surplus which they distributed was wealth that others had created and which the possessors had not earned.

How had such things come to pass? Ah! that question he could answer, since he himself had once been a part of the system. He knew, far better than did his patient, blinded people, the enormous sums of money needed to fire the engines that run the nation's political machinery, and whence that corruption fund came—from those whom our "prosperity" crowned. Had Bob not known the answer from specific instances, he could have read it in the awful rapidity with which the wealth created by this nation and the power generated by that wealth, were passing into the control of that small group of modern financiers—the "money kings."

A nation, a great people, was being *bought*—was being sold into slavery!

And all this was wrong, in denial of the ideals of the Commonwealth, in disobedience of the natural law which says, "Let a man's reward be measured by his value to humanity." He would do nothing to disturb the just balance of the state; to his executive brain organization and equilibrium were prime essentials. But there was—there must be!—some means by which the injustice could be corrected, the world's happiness and the reward of effort more equitably distributed. He could not then propound the remedy. But one thing he knew—the remedy, when found, could never be applied so long as the machinery of government remained in the power of those against whom the remedy was to apply.

What was to be his part? That question had been answered when Haggin told him of his city's sorrowing in his suffering. These people—*his people!*—whom he had used as a lever to lift him to power that he might the more arrogantly worship his petty self-god—had ignored the shameful truth about him, had stood loyally, trustingly by him, had bared their heads in sorrow when it seemed that he must die. He was humbled to the dust. And then, even in his humility, he was raised again by the inspiration that was never to forsake him.

"I have been a failure," thought this man whose brilliant success a nation was considering wonderingly, "since I have missed the real meaning of life. These are my people, they need me. Let me serve!"

Unconsciously he spoke the last words aloud.

"Let me serve!" Kathleen repeated slowly.

It was easy to lay one's heart bare to Kathleen!

"Kathleen!" And his voice was husky, as it had been when he had spoken the same words of a woman whom he had hurt. "Kathleen, I've many things to make up to many people. And I want to do it. I have misused myself. I see it all now—what I've refused to see all my life. Kathleen, something has gone out of me."

"You mean," she said gently, "that something has come into your heart—the greatest of all things."

He smiled at her. It seemed to Kathleen that his thin, ugly face, alight with his new inspiration, was the most beautiful in the world.

"And you will be happy, Bob, as you have never been." There was a catch in her voice.

"Kathleen," he answered gravely, "it was once my boast that I thought nothing of happiness. I'm not thinking of happiness now."

He lost himself once more in his vision, forgetting her.

She left him and went to her room to stifle, if she could, the vain hunger that had never died out of her heart.

CHAPTER II

THE FORCE—WHICH IS LOVE

DURING the days of Bob's illness Eleanor had wandered restlessly through the big Sanger house in passionate remorse and self-hate. During the time of his convalescence the restless wandering continued in mingled thanksgiving and humility. When the turning point of his fever had been safely passed, the governor returned to the capital. But Mrs. Dunmeade stayed on, most of the time with Eleanor. Mrs. Dunmeade's heart ached for her cousin, but she knew not how to comfort her. Sanger, too, saw the change he had remarked in Eleanor become daily more pronounced; and it puzzled him. Not until Mrs. Dunmeade was preparing to return home was the amazing reason discovered to him.

It was the day when the doctors finally pronounced Bob out of danger. Mrs. Dunmeade had spent the afternoon with the Flinns and returned early in the evening to find Eleanor and her brother alone in the firelit library. Eleanor turned to her with an inquiring glance.

"He is much better," Mrs. Dunmeade answered the glance. "The doctors say that unless a relapse occurs—and careful nursing will prevent that—it is only a matter of regaining his strength."

Eleanor made no answer. But Sanger saw a strange light—to him, a revelation—come into her face. He gave no hint of the light dawning upon him, but chatted impersonally for a few minutes. When he came to a period, Eleanor quietly arose and left the room, followed by Sanger's incredulous eyes.

"Absurd! Incredible!" he muttered to himself.

Then he turned swiftly, angrily, on Mrs. Dunmeade. "Is this some of your work?"

She answered quietly. "It is the work of something which you, Henry Sanger, or I can neither help nor impede."

"Ah! I remember, your husband has a theory," he sneered.

"John recognizes a fundamental principle of existence. Some day you, I think, will recognize it as a force you can't resist."

He shrugged his shoulders skeptically. "You and I always did disagree, Katherine."

"That's the weakness of you rich men. You are anachronistic. You think in terms of several centuries ago. You won't see that the principle of social responsibility has come into its own—until too late to save yourselves."

"You would be impressive on the stump, Katherine." Sanger was his impassive self again. "But how am I concerned with that principle?"

"In this—the people that recognize it won't long tolerate your antequated methods and philosophy. And in this—even your triumph wouldn't bring you happiness or content; selfish victory never does, Henry. You can trample underfoot the happiness of a great people without a regret. You can destroy the work of good men—and that wouldn't count with you, either. But even you, Henry Sanger, have one love. And you know now that every step you take is on Eleanor's heart."

He did not answer at once. He frowned irritably.

"I have a responsibility," he said at last, dispassionately, "to my wealth and to my class. Incidentally I have an ambition. If between them Eleanor must be hurt—I'm sorry. If you thought to spike one of the enemy's guns, you have failed, Katherine."

"You can hardly expect ever to be shown mercy."

"I'm not asking mercy," he replied complacently. "I don't need it. I never shall. What you visionaries close your eyes to is that the world is ruled by its necessities, by its pocket-book. You're on the crest of the wave now—but our time is coming. We don't ask mercy, because we don't intend to show mercy."

"Poor Eleanor!"

"I'm not responsible for that," he answered sharply, rising. "It's McAdoo's ambition and yours—or mine. It may take ten years or twenty, but in the end it will be *mine*—neither you nor your husband nor McAdoo—nor Eleanor—shall stand in the way. We haven't taken you reformers seriously, we men of wealth. But we haven't developed this nation's industries to let a few dreamers take them from us. Now," his eyes gleamed, "we accept your challenge. It means war, Katherine. And your friend McAdoo shall be the first to go under. Tell him that." He left her abruptly.

And yet, that evening at dinner, Mrs. Dunmeade thought she detected in his manner an unwonted gentleness toward Eleanor.

One evening—Mrs. Dunmeade had returned to her home and Bob's convalescence was progressing rapidly—Eleanor and her brother were alone at dinner. At its end he accompanied her to the library.

"Henry," she asked abruptly, "do you know where Paul Remington is?"

"I do not," he returned calmly. "He visited my office twice the day before the election. On his second visit we had a difference of opinion as to what should be done with a certain document. I maintained my position. He seemed much disturbed by that fact. I haven't heard of him since."

"Then he had the decency to be ashamed, at least."

He made no answer, although she fancied she saw a slight flush rise to his face; but it might have been the firelight. She looked at him steadily a moment. Then she dropped her eyes to the floor, thoughtfully. After a short silence, she raised her eyes to his once more.

"There is one thing I'd like you to do, if you will."

"You have but to name it."

"Under Uncle Henry's will, I believe, he left me this house and the annuity?"

"Yes."

"Will you give me the value of the annuity and buy the house from me?"

"It shall be done to-morrow," he answered abruptly. "May I ask what your plans are?"

"They aren't settled yet, except that I am going away in a few days."

"When do you expect to return?"

"Never."

"Ah! Then I am to understand that, in the parlance of the stage, I am cast off? You doubtless class me as the villain in the recent episode?"

She sighed wearily. "I blame you no more than myself—not so much. I'm not very proud of myself, Henry."

"I suppose most people would regard it a queer evidence of affection, but—I care too much for you to urge you to stay, Eleanor."

"You refuse to take me seriously?"

"I'm not joking," he said quietly, and the Sanger manner for once was absent. "You're the only person I ever cared for, Eleanor."

He was manifestly telling the truth. Her astonishment was genuine and unconcealed. "I can't believe it. You cared for me—and yet you could—"

"Yes," he interrupted, still quietly. "And would do it again. My emotions are under perfect control."

She rose impulsively and took a step toward him, her lips parted as if to speak. But his uplifted hand stayed her.

"Under perfect control," he repeated sharply. "I beg that you make no demonstration. I understand the situation better than I did. Your feeling over that Remington matter is quite justified—from your point of view. Therefore I am ready to assist you, as far as you will allow me, in the casting-off process. You have gone over to the enemy; rather, you never were on my side, really. Our points of view differ radically. I think you are very wise. It will save us both some —discomfort.

"That Remington affair," he continued, rising, "was very amateurish and, in so far as you were concerned, in poor taste—"

"I was concerned in it all, Henry."

"For that, accept my profound apologies. And now—don't you think we'd better end this little scene. My secretary will bring you the necessary papers to-morrow for your signature."

She made no answer. He left her alone. Her loneliness seemed to her immeasurable, complete.

The next day, as Sanger had promised, his secretary presented to her the papers necessary for the conveyance of the house and the release of the annuity; also, there was placed in her hands a certified check for a generous sum.

At last—so proclaimed the daily reports from the convalescent's room—the time came when she could fulfil her promise to Kathleen. For a week longer Eleanor postponed the dreaded visit. It was no easy task Kathleen had set for her; Eleanor could avow her love to Paul, to Kathleen, to Mrs. Dunmeade, but the fear lest she betray her heart to Bob stirred up agonies of pride. But one day she summoned her resolution and went bravely forth to abase herself before the man who, she believed, must hate her bitterly. She had ordered the automobile, but on reaching the door, changed her mind and walked to Bob McAdoo's home, as she had done the night when all supposed that he must die. More than once her heart failed her, crying out, "I can't!"—to be answered with, "You must!"

Bob and Kathleen were sitting by the window of his library. It had become her daily custom, when school was over, to hasten home for an hour's chat with him before dinner. But they were not talking now. He was staring absently into space, a habit that had fixed itself upon him since his illness. But not thinking of her, she knew; so easily could he forget her!

Suddenly Kathleen, looking out of the window, started. Quietly she rose and left the room. At the door she stopped to look back; he had taken no account even of her departure.

The maid, instructed by Kathleen, led Eleanor upstairs and left her at the open door of Bob's room.

And as she stood on the threshold, the need for her courage passed away. Strangely enough, this meeting to which she had looked forward with such painful uncertainty, no longer seemed unnatural or difficult. Fear of him and of his judgment fell from her. For one thrilling instant she looked at him, the mask of expression drawn aside, all her heart in her eyes.

He did not observe her entrance at once. He was reclining in his big chair by the window, a heavy shawl thrown loosely around his shoulders. The ravages of his illness were plainly apparent. The big hands, white and bony, drooped inertly from the chair's arms. His close-cropped head rested passively on a pillow. His position by the window threw the angular, uncomely profile into sharp relief, marking the hollows and pallor of his face. In his eyes was the tired, wistful expression peculiar to fever convalescents. She felt in them still another quality, a deep sadness bred of no mere physical weakness.

He felt her gaze. His head turned slowly to face her. He looked at her wonderingly, without speaking. His hand brushed across his forehead in a troubled gesture, as one would brush aside a dream that lingers overlong. She strove to give her words a conventional tone.

"I'm glad you are recovering so rapidly, Mr. McAdoo."

His face lighted up in an incredulous eagerness.

"Are you—*real?* I was just thinking of you. And sometimes my fancies get the better of me nowadays."

He got to his feet uncertainly. She saw the effort it cost him in his weakness. Slowly she crossed the room to his side. He held out his hand hesitatingly. She put her gloved hand in his; he caught it in a strong clasp.

"You mustn't stand," she said anxiously. "You aren't strong yet."

He sank back into his chair. As he did so, the shawl fell from his shoulders. Tremblingly he stooped to recover it. But she was swifter than he. She threw it around him again. As she drew her arm away, it brushed against him. For the first time their eyes looked away.

She took the chair where Kathleen had been. For a few minutes there was an awkward silence. She gazed steadily out of the window, lest her eyes outrun her tongue in explaining her coming. He could not know that in his weakness and new-found humility his appeal was stronger to her than in his old superb, arrogant strength. It was he who at last broke the silence. The words fell haltingly, uncertainly.

"I can't quite realize it. Often I have thought of you as being here—there are so many things I wanted to say to you. Now—seeing you there—in that chair—"

She turned to him eagerly, her eyes pleading with him not to misunderstand. "I *had* to come—to acknowledge my fault."

"Your fault? But—"

"Yes. My shameful fault! Don't you see, I owed it to myself to come."

With an effort he seemed to bring himself to the reality of her coming. In the sudden forcefulness of his reply she saw a hint of the Bob that had been.

"You mean—Paul Remington? But that is not your fault. I—I only—am responsible for that. I tried to shape his life after mine—a poor model, Mrs. Gilbert. I tried to cut him off from his happiness. Being what he was, he *had* to leave me. And there were—others—who were tempting him. We were too much for him."

"Ah! But I made it easy for him to yield by making him discontented—"

"It began before that. But that was your right, too. I tried to cut you off from your happiness."

"But—it makes what I did the more shameful—my happiness was not involved, Mr. McAdoo."

He shook his head gravely. "It might have been. He was very lovable." He used the past tense in which we speak of the dead.

Again their eyes fell apart, and there was a silence. He looked out of the window; his face was sad. Absently she stripped the glove from her right hand, her fingers twisting and untwisting it nervously. She forced herself to speak.

"You have learned the lesson of generosity well, Mr. McAdoo."

"I have to earn the charity that has been given me—from every one—now from you." A tinge of color came into his pale cheeks, as once more the face of the stricken woman came before him. "I was cruel, brutal, to you—yet you could come here. Doesn't that prove that you, too, have forgiven much—far more than I?"

"No! For what you said was true."

Again he shook his head gravely. "You mustn't say that. I have learned to see things more clearly. I was cruelly unjust."

"Ah! you are generous! And I was afraid to come —afraid of your judgment! You make me the more ashamed—"

"Don't!" he cried sharply, as if in pain. "It hurts to see you abase yourself before me!"

Again a silence, while his eyes held hers. The quality of his gaze frightened her. It was saying too much—breaking down her self-command, drawing her to him. She spoke hastily.

"Mr. McAdoo, do you know that he has disappeared?"

She saw then the hurt that had been put upon him. "Yes. I have tried to have him found, but they can discover no trace of him. But I will not give up until he is found—and our fault repaired." He used the plural unconsciously.

"When you find him, will you let me know? I shall send an address to the Dunmeades."

"You are going away?"

"Yes. To-morrow."

"And you will not come back." He did not ask a question.

He turned once more to look out into the street. But he saw nothing there. He was measuring the meaning of the moment. It was the first time they had met without that unnatural, disturbing sense of hostility. She had changed, as had he; he felt it in her every word, in her presence. Yet her humility hurt him strangely. Those who have suffered are quick to sense sorrow in others; he felt that somehow, in the collapse of his temple to self, she, too, had been borne down, crushed. He had "many things to make up to her"—and he would never have the chance; she was going away, out of his life, as suddenly as she had come. . . . Both feared the next meeting of eyes. Each had a secret that must be withheld. Yet by that telepathy which informs hearts even across the distances, each guessed the other's secret, knew that the frank intimacy of the moment sprang from more than a common regret, was more than the death of an unreasoning hostility. But they were not children. The scales had fallen from their eyes. Both knew that before life's happiness comes life's responsibility, and that they, in their game of cross-purposes, had assumed a responsibility which was not yet fulfilled. Because the lesson was but newly learned, they enjoined themselves the more sternly to abide by it.

She rose. He, too, got to his feet. She held out her ungloved hand. He took it again in his strong clasp. Her lips tried to fashion a conventional farewell.

"I hope you will soon get your strength back—and that you will be successful always—and happy." At the last words her voice began to falter.

"I pray that life will be kinder to you than it has been, Mrs. Gilbert. And that you will forget all this—and me." Unsteadiness was in his voice, too.

"*Can* we forget?"

"I don't want to forget!" he cried.

"Nor do I want to forget!" The crimson flooded to her cheeks. But the unruly tongue ran on. "I couldn't forget, if I would! That night—when we thought you were dying—it is before me always. When I saw you lying there—it seemed to me that *I* had struck you down—"

"You were here—! I don't understand. You came—"

"Ah! can't you see? I *had* to come—to make my acknowledgment. I thought you were dying—Miss Flinn was nearest to you—I told her. She made me promise to come to you when you were able. That is why I am here now—"

She would have withdrawn her hand, but his clasp tightened. His left hand fumbled at his throat, as though he were choking. "I don't understand. You cared enough to come—"

"Ah! can't you see?" she cried piteously.

"Why did you come into my life—to teach me my lesson—to go away *now?* Why, since you must go away, were you chosen by the Force, which is—"

Before him flashed the interpretation of the past few months, of the memory that had outlived the busy, crowded years. His face lighted up with a look no man or woman had ever seen there.

"It wasn't you I hated—it wasn't you I fought against, but—*love!*"

Words that spoke of themselves! He lifted his head sharply, as does the stag in the forest when he hears the call of his far-away mate. His eyes caught hers in the grip that would not be denied, crying out that she was his—*his!* His weakness was forgotten. His physical being thrilled in every fiber. . . . The crimson ebbed. Her eyes wavered, fell—returned to his, luminous with the answer. . . . The moment ended.

"Mr. McAdoo, there is a ruined life between us!"

She was gone, leaving Bob alone.

And yet not alone. For with him was the memory of a thrilling, wonderful moment when he had looked into the depths of a woman's heart. And between them lay an impassable barrier, a barrier of their own building.

He bowed his face in his hands and prayed—prayed for courage and patience and faith to bear his punishment—and to atone.

CHAPTER III

ATONEMENT

THERE was one matter to be settled before Bob might begin to work out his own and his city's political regeneration. Two good friends took this burden from his shoulders.

Hardly had his convalescence begun when Sanger's newspapers began to hint, at first vaguely, then more boldly, at possible criminal prosecutions, even impeachment proceedings, on the ground of Bob's fraudulent nomination. A murmur of protest arose from the city. If the man had sinned, had he not suffered for his sin? But Haggin, knowing more of the quality of his chief's enemies, spent many a sleepless night over the newspaper growlings.

He finally went to District Attorney Martin.

"We got to stop it," he said anxiously. "We *got* to stop it—an' *now.* But I dunno how."

Martin surveyed the saloon-keeper thoughtfully. "It's a pretty tough nut to crack. There's nothing in the threat of impeachment. But the prosecutions—Hmm! Why can't we wait until we can see McAdoo himself about this? It isn't so much a matter of legal knowledge as of knowing your opponent."

"No, we can't wait to see him." Haggin shook his shaggy head emphatically. "I don't want him to know nothin' about it till it's all settled, one way or 'nuther. He's got troubles enough of his own, without botherin' with mine."

"I should think that this is *his* trouble more than yours," Martin suggested dryly.

"An' that's where you're dead wrong," Haggin answered eagerly. "It wasn't him bought up those delegates—*it was me!*"

Martin sprang to his feet excitedly. "What! *You* did it? But his confession—Remington's affidavit—Haggin, you're lying to save him!"

"No, I ain't lyin'. It was Bob lyin' when he told Remington—damn him!—that he done it. I tell you, *I* done it. It was this way, Martin. They comes to me—I s'posin' it was MacPherson all the time, but it was Sanger really—an' tries to buy me an' my votes in the convention. I jollies 'em along till I knows all they've got up their sleeve. Then I tells Bob. He ain't feazed fer a damn. There ain't time for him to see all the Hemenway delegates, so he gives me some of 'em to handle an' he takes the rest. An' he tells me, 'Mind you, Tom, use no money now. That's straight. I've got to come out of this with clean hands.' He sees his men an' bluffs 'em—scares hell out of 'em—he's got the goods on 'em, you know—an' lines 'em up right under Mack's and Sanger's noses. I sees my men—some of 'em I bluffs, an' some of 'em I can't. I gets cold feet on the clean hands proposition an' buys 'em off. Uses my own money an' he don't know nothin' about it. Does it, 'spite of his orders."

"But Remington said—"

"I'm comin' to that. Afterward—'bout two weeks before election day, he finds out about it—from that skunk Malassey. He ought to kick me out,but he don't. Just sits down, writes out a check fer what I spent an' makes me take it. Never says a word, excep' somethin' about there not bein' enough soap an' water in the world to wash *his* hands clean. Then when Remington accuses him of buyin' the delegates, he takes all the blame an' never says a word about me. I wish to God," Haggin concluded miserably, "somebody'd *kill* me!"

Martin's keen eyes were boring into Haggin's mercilessly. Neither spoke for a few minutes. Then Haggin broke the silence hesitatingly.

"Say, Martin, why can't you prosecute me fer it? I'll plead guilty an' tell everything up to where he paid me back my money."

"You'd go to jail. I couldn't protect you."

"I don't care," Haggin answered desperately. "By God! I'd like to. It'd serve me *right* fer bein' such a fool as not to do what he told me. An' it'd clear him."

Suddenly Martin pushed a book toward Haggin.

"Haggin, put your hand on this Bible." The "Bible" happened to be a dictionary, but Haggin knew no better. "Do you swear on this book that what you have said is the truth?"

"I swear," Haggin answered steadily, his eyes not faltering before Martin's searching glance.

"Upon my soul!" Martin dropped limply back into his chair. "I don't know whether you're lying or not."

Haggin swore in his misery. "Course I'm tellin' the truth. Do you think I want to go to jail fer nothin'."

Martin wrinkled his brow over the problem.

"Haggin," he said abruptly, after a few minutes' thinking, "tell me all you know about that convention business."

And Haggin told him a tale of wholesale corruption such as to cause even Martin, familiar as he was with the devious and foul methods of our politics, to experience a qualm of disgust.

"We'll see," he said, when the account was finished. "I don't think you'll have to go to jail, Haggin."

It was reported next morning that District Attorney Martin had left the city for a two weeks' vacation. As a matter of fact, he was quietly at work ferreting out certain facts in connection with the convention bribery.

The end of his two weeks' work was marked by a series of meetings between him and certain lesser politicians who had been prominent in Larkin's campaign. These were followed by a conference with MacPherson, at the conclusion of which the latter left, white and shaking.

Then Martin called on Henry Sanger, Jr. The two were closeted for over an hour. When Martin rose to leave, he remarked:

"It is understood then—your papers are muzzled, or I publish these affidavits and begin proceedings myself. You understand, too, that the statute of limitations runs two years on these offenses? That is clear, I hope?"

"Perfectly," Sanger answered coolly. "For two years you have me tied. After that—we shall resume hostilities on an equal footing. You're a smart lawyer, Martin."

"And, by the way, Mr. Sanger," Martin added, "you will be surprised to learn that McAdoo did *not* bribe those delegates and knew nothing about it until weeks after the convention. You are now fighting an honest man."

"Indeed!" Sanger answered indifferently. "Good afternoon, Mr. Martin."

Thereafter newspaper discussion of the nomination was dropped.

When Bob was strong enough to be allowed to receive visitors, Martin went to him and told him all these things. Bob listened without interrupting the flow of the tale.

At its conclusion he said simply, "You're a good friend, Martin." And Martin somehow felt very happy.

"I owe you an apology, Mr. McAdoo," he said, after a moment's silence. "When Haggin told me that you hadn't known of the bribing, I thought he was lying—until I had other evidence. I'm ashamed that—"

"Don't!" Martin thought he caught a note of pain in Bob's voice. "You had no reason to think me above it. I had done things as bad—or worse. My hands aren't very clean, Martin. And Haggin was my agent in the matter. He did it for me."

"Clean hands or not, Mr. McAdoo," Martin exclaimed impulsively. "I'd rather fight under you than under any other man in the country."

He went away wondering at the new McAdoo he had found.

Others, too, saw and wondered. For there was a new McAdoo indeed. The lesson had sunk deep. Kathleen, watching closely, in real dread lest with returning strength the old spirit should return, saw that the change was complete and permanent. The old Bob, arrogant, self-aggrandizing, hard, lay dead amid the fragments of his shattered self-god. Something more Kathleen saw, that he bore the burden of a profound sorrow and shame.

None the less, however, his old certainty and forcefulness remained with him, as his enemies soon discovered.

And his was no easy task, to keep his people's interest in him and his work at effective heat. He had need of popular support; the old corrupt methods were for ever discarded. His people had rallied around him during the campaign, and when they believed him to be dying had mourned; but, after all, their interest was for the man rather than for an idea and, once the campaign excitement subsided, interest slackened perceptibly. Perhaps, too, they had at heart expected little from him; they were content with little.

His enemies had much material with which to work. Although he had been elected, they had succeeded in electing a slight majority in the city councils. Their forces were carefully organized to fight him. Yet the advantage was all with Bob. For Sanger's ring, bound only by the ties of self-interest, must needs foster many corrupt measures in the city's legislature. Bob, looking only to the people's needs, was free to veto these measures. The struggle, growing more dramatic as the months went by, served to counteract the popular tendency to lose interest. Each successive election saw his organization, both in his party and in the city government, become stronger.

Nor were Bob's political activities confined to the

Steel City. Murchell, although he amazed his friends and physicians by the tenacity with which he held on to life, grew steadily weaker. Under his guidance, Bob and Dunmeade together fought against the railroad-steel interests, with whom the open break had at last come. It was a tremendous struggle, that stirred the commonwealth to its uttermost limits.

Bob's part in the state campaign took him often to the capital, where he was received frankly into the beautiful home life of the governor's family. These glimpses of a happiness and content he had never known made his own life seem the drearier.

"What I have missed in my blindness!" he thought. Yet there was no complaint. "I have deserved it all —all!"

Sometimes he found himself alone with Mrs. Dunmeade. From her he received his only news of Eleanor Gilbert during all those long months.

"You have Mrs. Gilbert's address?" he asked abruptly one evening when, after a long conference, they had induced him to remain overnight at the capital.

"Yes. She is in New York." Mrs. Dunmeade gave him an address.

"I supposed she was abroad."

"She was, for a few months, studying music. Then she grew homesick for her own country, I think, for she suddenly changed her plans and returned. We wanted her to make her home with us. But she preferred to stay in New York. She is doing settlement work."

"Settlement work!" But Mrs. Dunmeade misunderstood his tone.

"It is not to be despised, Mr. McAdoo," she said in quiet reproof. "I know how little such things appeal to big men like you."

"I don't despise it, Mrs. Dunmeade." And she was surprised at the forcefulness of his answer. "No work is to be despised that means sacrifice."

"Ah! But it *doesn't* mean sacrifice. I don't think you understand her. The old life meant nothing to her. From her letters I know that in her work, the first real work she has ever had—even though it is small—she is happier than ever before."

"I'm glad she is happy. Will you write to her," he added immediately, "that we have found no trace of Paul Remington? But that I am still searching." Mrs. Dunmeade did not ask why he himself should not write.

This was just before the famous "gas franchise war," which finally gave Bob's enemies into his hands. The Steel City's homes were dependent for heat upon natural gas, supplied by a company operating under an exclusive franchise from the city. This franchise provided for an extortionate maximum charge, the enforcement of which had worked great hardship on the consumers. But when the McAdoo administration was a year old the monopoly's rights had almost expired and an extension, under the old terms, was demanded by the gas company. Bob immediately, in a public message, declared that he would oppose the extension, unless it provided for a reasonable rate to the consumer. His message was hailed with huzzas by the long-suffering public.

MacPherson, resurrected to organize the councilmanic opposition to Bob, led the fight for the ordinance. His genius for corruption, never so shamefully brilliant, was given free play. Bob resorted to every method his craft could devise to defeat the ordinance, but in vain; the measure passed both houses of councils.

When it was presented to Bob for approval, he vetoed it with a clear explanation of his reasons for so doing.

The bill was reintroduced into councils in the hope of securing the two-thirds majority necessary to pass it over the mayor's veto.

The councilmen found themselves between two hot fires. On the one hand was MacPherson; and the mayor saw more than one supposedly stanch follower caught in his enemy's net. On the other hand was Bob—with the people awakened to a fury of indignation. The Steel City had never known such an uprising. The awakening was complete. Beneath the immediate problem of dollars and cents the people had discerned a principle; the thing that Sanger feared—moral passion—was fanned into life.

The tale is told that during the night and day preceding the final reading of the ordinance, MacPherson kept his councilmen secretly locked together in an obscure hotel, away from the influence of the crowds. On the hour of the council's meeting they were quietly marched to their chamber in a body, guarded by MacPherson in person.

When they reached the council chambers those renegades must have trembled. Every available inch of space in the spectator's gallery was packed by indignant citizens. There was no clamor. Those stern-faced, determined men were not of the stuff of which mobs are made. Over the gallery—significant fact!—

hung ropes, each with a noose tied at its dangling end. MacPherson's glare could not stay the panic in his creatures' hearts. He was a bold man, indeed, who would vote for the ordinance that night.

And into the chamber they saw Bob walk. From the gallery came one hoarse shout, stilled instantly by his raised hand. Straight to MacPherson, standing at one side, where he could watch the proceedings, Bob strode. The two glared at each other for one tense moment, MacPherson with hot, vindictive hatred, Bob with steady determination.

"Get out of this chamber!" It was Bob who spoke—in a quiet, repressed tone which nevertheless carried a threat.

MacPherson sneered. "I have the right to be here—"

"Get out of this chamber!" This time the voice rang through the silence of the crowded hall.

"By God! I'll stay here until I'm good and ready to leave, Bob McAdoo!"

"MacPherson!" Bob pointed to the crowded gallery. "You see that crowd. If I were to give the word, they would tear you to pieces. That crowd means *business*. I won't give them the word, but unless you go—and *now*—I'll throw you out. I won't answer for what happens after that."

MacPherson looked at the grim crowd and the grimmer man in front of him. His sallow visage became yellower than ever.

He began what was meant to be a defiant reply. "You dare lay one finger on me—"

He got no further. He saw Bob's big hand shoot out toward him, felt a grip like a steel vise clutch his shoulder.

MacPherson turned tail and ran, slinking out of the hall amid unbroken silence.

Bob turned to the councilmen.

"Now then—beat that ordinance!" he said quietly.

So the ordinance was defeated. Some days later a new ordinance, drawn up under Bob's direction, was introduced. In due time it passed, signed and accepted by the gas company.

The night after Bob's victory, fifty thousand of the Steel City's best citizens paraded before his home and cheered him as the next governor.

The cheering thousands marched on, leaving the quiet street to return to its wonted dingy calm. Kathleen, proud and rejoicing, sought Bob in his library. The man in whose honor a great city had made holiday sat before the fire in an attitude of complete dejection. Unnoticed, she halted on the threshold; often during the past year she had found him so and had stolen away without breaking in on his loneliness.

She started to steal away as before. Then, impulsively turning, she went swiftly to his side.

"Bob," she cried tremulously, "what is it?"

He looked up at her, startled, and rose with an evident effort to collect himself.

"Nothing, Kathleen," he said in a tired voice. "Nothing that matters much."

"Ah! but there *is* something that matters. Haven't we all seen it? You're breaking our hearts, Bob."

"I haven't meant to trouble you with my moods."

"And to-night, with all these people showing you their love and pride in you—when you have deserved it so well—when you should be only proud and happy—I find you here—so!" Her voice almost broke.

"Don't!" He shrank from her praise as he never shrank from a physical blow. "That's what hurts to-night. I have *not* deserved their kindness. I have done so little. Nothing!"

"Nothing! It means nothing to you to have stood between nearly a million people and injustice?"

"But *I* didn't do that," he insisted, with weary patience. "What has been done, the people did themselves. All I did was to veto a bill any clever politician would have vetoed as a matter of policy, and to pull off a shallow, theatrical trick that, after all, probably wasn't necessary."

"But," she cried, "who began the fight? Who led public sentiment and made it effective? These people to-night were right—it has been *your* victory! No wonder they're so proud of you—the good, kind people!"

"Too good, too kind!" he answered with a bitterness that was all toward himself. "They forget all the evil and remember only the little good. But *I* can't! And to-night—they have made me feel small and mean."

"Small and mean! Bob, will you never learn to know yourself? I—" Her voice broke in a little laugh that was near to tears—"I'd like to shake you!"

He smiled. "I wish you would, Kathleen. That's the only way I can learn, it seems, by having the truth shaken, pounded into me."

Tears came to her eyes. "Ah! don't think I don't know what this long year has been to you," she said pityingly. "You were always cruel to yourself, driving yourself mercilessly, even when—"

"When I was a selfish brute."

"Before you found yourself. And now you're far more harsh and unforgiving toward yourself than you are to others. Haven't I seen your heartache? I know how you have counted on finding Paul and remaking his life, and how bitter the disappointment has been. And," she rushed on, though she knew his soul was writhing at being thus laid bare, "I know about *her.* Bob, give over your self-inflicted punishment, go to her and take happiness—for both of you."

The slow red burned its way to his face. His eyes gleamed strangely. "Not that!" he said sternly; she knew that the sternness was for the hope within him that would not die. "That can never be."

"But it *can* be. She loves you."

"Kathleen, there is Paul Remington's ruined life. No good, no happiness can come from a love that has that to answer for."

"How I have hoped," she almost wailed, "how I have *prayed,* that you would find your real self, your real place in life! But not like this—never like this! I wanted you to be happy. Don't punish yourself—forgive! Go to her, Bob, and be happy."

"Do you suppose I could seek happiness while Paul Remington's life is spoiled because I drove him into temptations he couldn't resist? I might have made him strong, a good man, but never by word or act did I teach him anything but selfishness and hypocrisy. If I were to shirk my punishment, I'd be a contemptible coward.

"My punishment," he went on quietly, "my punishment is just. Exactly the penalty a just God would devise. I'm not whining."

"You poor, elemental child!" she exclaimed pityingly. "What are you—what is any of us—in God's scheme of things, that our punishment should be so important?"

Bob looked at her, even in his fanatical self-torture startled by the new thought.

She rose to leave him. "Ever since you were sick, I've seen you lashing yourself in your self-imposed penance, exaggerating your faults, belittling your good work—as though God cares for your punishment! Duty ought to mean happiness—and you get nothing but a useless misery out of it. I thought you had found yourself. But you haven't. You have still one lesson to learn, faith. If I had not faith, I shouldn't want to live. I couldn't be happy."

"Yes, you *are* happy. And yet," he said slowly, "and yet I have sometimes fancied that you have had your heartache."

"Yes, I am happy," she said. And her face glowed. "I *am* happy. I'd hate to be so small as to be unhappy, merely because God hasn't arranged everything to my liking."

She left him.

"If only I could find him, if only I could find him!" he cried to himself.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRODIGAL

A WESTBOUND express train was rattling down the mountains. It was early spring even among the hills. Occasional patches of color flashed by, where dogwood and laurel, hardy pioneers, waved defiance to departing winter. Back in the flat lands, passengers on the train had caught glimpses of farmers, busy with their spring plowing. Field and forest were astir, thrilling in a new life, bringing forth new life.

A man on the train, dividing his attention between the panorama without and the fretful child on his knee, to his surprise discovered in a flickering inward glow a feeble response to the life without. He was going home, with fear and little hope in his heart, yet he caught himself counting the mileposts with growing eagerness, as the train swung around the hills.

"The eternal witchery of spring," he murmured to himself, "filling our hearts with life and hope—false hope, sometimes." He repressed his mood wearily and turned his attention to humoring the child, who was becoming restless.

Out of the mountains rattled the train, through smoky tunnels, around sharp curves, into the foot-hills. A yellow brick station flashed by.

"Why, that is—" The man named the station. "Just sixty miles more!"

The child was asleep now and he turned once more to the flying scenery. Familiar touches in the landscape greeted him. A stranger would have turned away, since man had added no beauty to those hills. But he was a prodigal, returning from the far country, and he eyed them with a certain wistful friendliness —yellow-brown streams running away from the iron and sulphur beds; great, gaping holes in the hillsides, with their attendant pyramids of coal; oil derricks, tossed aloft like huge ladders resting on the clouds; the coke ovens, a hundred red eyes gleaming through the dusk; detached factories, outposts of the great industrial army.

The train stopped. A newsboy came aboard, crying the evening papers. A passenger who occupied the seat in front of the man with the child bought one.

"I see Murchell's dying," he remarked to his neighbor across the aisle. "A big loss to this state!"

"Not so big as if we didn't have McAdoo," returned the other.

"That's true. They're turning their guns on him already, too. Revived that old nomination story. For my part I don't believe it."

"I do believe it, but I don't care. I'd have done the same under the circumstances. A lot of people will care, though. Funny about us Americans—the occasional slip-up of a good man cuts a bigger figure with us than the continual crimes of a really dishonest one. He'll be governor, though."

The train started, and the man with the child lost the answer. He shrank back in his chair. "How can I go back? How can they *let* me? O, God, keep my courage alive!"

The dusk faded into night. Through long stretches of dingy factory towns roared the train. Into the big city. The man with the child began awkwardly to wrap his charge against the night air. His hands trembled violently. When the train stopped he alighted, quaking inwardly. He pulled his hat well down, walking with head bent over the child in his arms, lest among the bustling crowds at the depot might be some who recognized him. He took a cab, fearing the curious eyes of the street-car passengers. He need not have feared; the people of that city had long since cast him out of their memories. The worn-out horse dragged its load slowly enough up the steep streets, but to the fare he seemed to be flying.

They turned into a familiar, quiet street. The prodigal's limbs were shaking so that he could hardly hold the child. His heart beat painfully. Wild thoughts of leaving the baby on the doorstep and fleeing rushed through his brain. The cab stopped. The passenger, shivering, got out.

He walked slowly up the gravel path leading to the porch. He could see into the brightly lighted library. He knew every little detail of that room. He remembered that once, in that room, he had sworn to be true —whatever might come!

To the long French window came a woman, her figure silhouetted against the bright light of the lamps. He recognized Kathleen. She was looking out at him. . . .

She opened the door, gazing gravely at the bearded, sallow-faced man who stared at her strangely.

"Do you wish to see Mr. McAdoo? He's out of the city just now."

"Kathleen!" he cried in a strange, croaking voice. "Don't you know me?"

"Paul!" Doubt, amazement, joy, voiced themselves in the word. And welcome shone in her eyes as a harbor light to the storm-driven seafarer.

"Paul! You have been long coming!"

"I bring you a responsibility, Kathleen." He held out the child.

"We welcome responsibilities here," she answered happily. She held out her arms for the baby.

"Wait! She is my sister's child. Her father's name I don't know. She has no right to be in the world. She is cursed from her birth. Will you take her?"

"All the more for that reason!"

She took the child from him, cuddling it close to her heart.

"Come in, Paul! Don't stand there! Don't you know you have come *home?"*

He followed her into the library. The warm, cozy room seemed to enfold him, to welcome him. He sank into a chair, burying his face in his hands.

"Kathleen, I can't help it. I don't want to leave—to run away out into the loneliness again—"

She petted him as she would pet a child.

"Do you think we will *let* you, Paul?"

"Do you think—*he*—will let me stay?"

"Have you any doubt?" She faced him proudly. "Then you don't know our Bob!"

. . . Since the day when the first prodigal went out into that far country, the story of prodigals has been the same; it is never a pretty tale. First always comes the time of passion unleashed, when life glows red in the glass. If there be a thing which the prodigal would forget, he is apt to drink the more deeply. But always comes the time when the glass is empty, when his eyes turn homeward. Not cowardice but courage sets his feet in the pathway of his eyes. There have been prodigals who did not return; they have been the cowards.

"It wasn't easy, Kathleen—I was so ashamed—but it was very lonely."

"But all that is ended, Paul."

Sometimes life throws the prodigal a line. In Paul's case the line was his sister, another astray under the curse of inherited temperament, whom he had found dying and hugging to her heart a child of passion.

"She died. But I made those last weeks easier for her, I think. That should count for something—do you think so, Kathleen?"

"That should count for a great deal, Paul."

"If only I could be of some use to *him!* I'd like to be." The humility sat strangely on Paul.

"Ah! I see you don't understand. He needs all the help all of us can give. For William Murchell is dying—and Bob must take his place."

"He has risen high—I am glad!" And she saw that he was sincere.

He lay back in his chair, his eyes closing. The friendly room seemed to caress him. He was very tired; it had been long since he had known rest.

He tried to realize that the aimless, lonely wanderings, the long journey, were ended, that he had come *home*. . . . Then he heard once more the chance words of his fellow-passenger on the train, "They're turning their guns on him already . . . revived that old nomination story." He sat up suddenly, with a despairing cry:

"Kathleen, it's not possible! I *can't* stay. I can't help him. I can only hurt him. Don't you see, I'll be a reminder, to him and to every one, of what must be forgotten—that thing—his shame!"

"But you don't understand," she cried. "What others think doesn't count. He has never denied it. Partly, I think, because he wouldn't shame you before the people. As for him—it wasn't *his* shame. He wasn't guilty."

"He—wasn't—guilty!"

Then to the bewildered Paul she told the story of the convention as she had had it from Haggin.

It was long before he answered. He lay back in his chair once more. His hands and face twitched continuously; evidently his nerves were gone. She did not speak to him. It was not easy, the thing required of him.

At last he opened his eyes. "It's the only thing to do."

She guessed what was in his mind. "He would never ask it, Paul."

"Let us call Haggin and do it. *Now*—to-night—while my courage lasts."

Carrying the baby she left him alone in the library. When she returned, after many minutes, she had left the child asleep in the motherly arms of Norah.

Paul was lying in the chair, in the same attitude as when she had left him, his eyes closed. So still was he, she thought for a moment that he had fallen asleep. She saw the forlorn wreck his vice had left, and her heart bled for him.

But he was not asleep. He opened his eyes and looked up at her questioningly.

"They are coming now," she answered the question. Then she added abruptly, almost sharply, "Paul, it's only fair to you to tell you that—that Bob and Mrs. Gilbert—" She stopped as abruptly as she had begun.

He made no answer, and after a while she continued, gently:

"Is there any reason why they shouldn't be happy—as men and women want to be happy, Paul?"

Again it was a long time before he answered, in a voice that was very tired, "There is no reason. All that is dead—it has no right to live, Kathleen."

In her heart she was crying jealously to her secret, "It's the last thing I can do for him!" Aloud she said:

"You must tell him that, too."

He did not notice that her voice was sharp and constrained. He was watching the fires of a real suffering, burning out the last vestige of the self that had been Paul Remington.

Many years before, Kathleen Flinn had assumed a responsibility; and that had been fulfilled. That night she assumed another—two, to be accurate. Perhaps she needed them for her happiness.

As for Paul—when Bob came home, the two men met quietly. What was said then need not be set down here, but a new footing was established; thereafter many things were ignored by them. Paul went on the staff of Bob's newspaper. The *Bugle's* editorials are often quoted in other newspapers of note; many have tried to imitate them in vain, perhaps because they breathe a spirit that can not be simulated convincingly. He is no longer a public figure in the Steel City. Few now remember his sensational disavowal of McAdoo, fewer still his equally sensational *amende*. Sometimes there have been struggles with a burning appetite. At such times he has fled to Kathleen; he tells her it is she who has conquered.

Both Kathleen and Paul are happy. At least, they have achieved content.

CHAPTER V

THE FALLING OF THE MANTLE

THE train that whirled Paul toward the Steel City was passed by another bearing Mayor McAdoo to the capital. Bob knew that he was mounting to a great climax in his life; a sense of responsibility weighed heavily upon him. He was hastening to the deathbed of a man who had come very close to him.

Bob saw much of Murchell during the two years following the Steel City mayoralty election. Saw and learned much. He came to feel a mighty admiration and affection for the great general who had created a new political era, who had shackled a nation to the service of a vast, voracious system, who had lifted at least one nonentity to the president's chair, and who in the last years of his life was struggling to undo the work of his prime. But far more than the marvelous strategy or the sure knowledge of men, far more even than the heroic fortitude under intense physical suffering, did the man's patience in repentance startle Bob.

"When a man reaches his three score years and ten," Murchell said to him one day, "he has learned that the evil or good a man does concerns himself least of all. The balance must remain heavily against me. But my interest in my work concerns the world not at all.

It is not affected by my need to put my house in order, but only by the work itself. So I must not think of my house, but only of the work. I must strive, not to atone, but to make the way ready for other men who will undo what I have done."

Before this broad humanity Bob sat ashamed. Such heights were as yet beyond his reach. "What are you in God's scheme of things that your punishment should be so important?" Kathleen had challenged him, and had opened his eyes to a fault. Murchell's lofty self-ignoring gave him an example that he strove to emulate.

Many other things, of less abstract kind, he learned from the master. Murchell revealed to him the secret, intricate inner workings of the vast machine that gripped the state as in a vise. Often Bob was astounded, seeing of what seemingly impossible material, from what discordant interests, Murchell had pieced together the organization whose function was to redeem the state. It was not all pretty. More than once he saw rebellious bosses enter the presence of the master, to leave shaking, stunned by the knowledge that they were inextricably in the power of a man who seemed to know everything. Not so often, because it was not so often necessary, he saw sudden, dire punishment ruthlessly let fall upon rebels who would not listen to reason. Many things Murchell and Bob did of which they said naught to the gentle Dunmeade, that they might save his heart from burning.

Gradually Bob came to understand that he had not diagnosed the situation correctly. He saw why Murchell and Dunmeade, though fighting against the most powerful combination of capital, had been able to prevail—because Murchell had been master indeed. Even when he used his power in the service of the interests, he had never let go one jot or tittle of the power. While he served them, they had not sought to undermine him. When he forsook their service, they were helpless to combat him. Gradually Bob came to understand, too, why the secrets and sources of Murchell's power were revealed to him. He was being prepared to take Murchell's place. Upon him, not upon Dunmeade, the master's mantle was to fall.

And now Murchell was dying.

Bob knew, as the train bore him swiftly to the east, that he was going to assume that mantle.

Years before, "I will be master of the state before I die!" Ambition had cried.

Now he said, "I am not yet forty. And I am master of the state!"

Master of the state! He had dreamed of power. Now power, tremendous, far-reaching, almost unlimited power, would be his, if he could retain what Murchell would place in his hands. If he could retain it! The old confidence in his strength came to him. Not the old lust of battle, but a steady, rising courage and a burning resolve throbbed in his heart.

"I can. I *will!*" His teeth clenched, his muscles tightened in the stress of his determination.

Not as he had dreamed it, came power. Nor was he the man who had dreamed. With power its responsibilities, its trust! He who had thrilled at the thought of power, now thrilled at the thought of its meaning. He had felt the Force breaking down the self within him, molding him to its purpose. Now he saw that purpose.

"I will be true to my trust. I will use my power for the good of this people. So help me God!"

His words were a prayer, not an oath. There was no exultation in his heart, neither was there humility. Self was forgotten. His task loomed large before him, self-obliterating, filling his horizon.

While his mind, running ahead into the years to come, was still visualizing the battle before him, his approach to the capital was announced by the brakeman.

Hastily detaching himself with a bruskness that somehow did not offend—they thought he must be very busy or he would not thus part with *them*—from the group of unknown admirers on the platform who insisted on shaking hands and wishing him good luck, Bob hurried toward the governor's mansion.

An obsequious man-servant, wearing the funereal air of one who knows that a liberal patron is about to depart this life, opened the door to him. In the library some one was playing the piano, very softly, the gentle, soothing chords lingering in the air. Thither the servant showed Bob.

On the threshold Bob halted sharply. Death, power, battle, were in an instant swept from his mind. His heart leaped convulsively. . . .

The player's back was toward him. She did not notice his entrance. He did not move, lest he might disturb her. Then her voice rose, full and clear and plaintive, in a song that not all the street pianos in the world can rob of its appeal. Bob listened in rapt attention. Once before he had heard her sing that song, on the night when, on that very spot, he had dealt her the cruelest blow a man could give a woman.

At the last line her voice shook slightly, once it faltered.

> ". . . To kiss the Cross, sweetheart, to kiss the
> Cross!"

The last long, quivering note died away. She turned and arose to face him. For a long minute they regarded each other unwaveringly. It had been two years and more since they had met, these two whose lives had so strangely crossed. They had been constantly in each other's minds, in each other's hearts. Each saw that the years had wrought changes in the other.

Every time he had seen her, her beauty had struck him anew; it was so different from that of the few women he knew. But he had loved best to remember her as he had last seen her, when she had come to him in the days of his sickness. How often, during the long months, in the secrecy of his room he had opened the book of his memory to look upon her standing there before him, her startled eyes answering the love in his! Now, in this sudden meeting, the picture he had carried seemed to him woefully inadequate. She was even more slender than before, yet less fragile. Her face was marked by a new gentleness, a new patience, and withal a new strength, that made her, to Bob's eyes, beautiful beyond dreams.

She, too, saw a change. He was the same stalwart figure as before, yet a slight stoop had come into the big shoulders. Streaks of gray were in his hair. The thin, strongly marked, ascetic face was the same, and yet not the same; the bold arrogance, the look of the all-conquering Viking, was gone. In its place had come the quiet, matured strength of the man who has proved himself, and the great kindliness of a strong man who has suffered without hardening.

Under his steady regard she trembled. She tried to take her eyes from his, but could not. She knew that in that moment of silence they were saying what must not be said. She tried to speak, to break the spell.

"I was singing for *him*—he asked me," she said unsteadily.

"I heard you sing that song for him once before, the night when I—" He could not go on.

"All that is forgotten, Mr. McAdoo."

He shook his head slowly. "It can never be forgotten, Mrs. Gilbert. Every night I dream of it," he answered sadly.

"It tore my heart that night, your singing." The words fell slowly. "I knew that these kind people had something I had not. They had learned the lesson. But I, in my ignorance, could not see how one could learn to kiss one's cross."

"Ah!" she answered gently. "I knew that something was hurting you that night. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise I should not have been so unspeakably brutal to you?" he interrupted forcefully. "You are generous to find an excuse for me. But that is not true. A man such as I was is apt to do such things, Mrs. Gilbert."

"A man such as you are is apt to be too harsh with himself, Mr. McAdoo. And," she could not help the hint of pride in her voice, "I have heard fine things of you. You have learned to kiss the cross, I think."

Again he shook his head. "I fear not. I have not grown so far yet. And," his voice was losing its steadiness, "seeing you here, I—I realize how heavy my cross has become."

He had need of all his strength to repress the words that flooded to his lips. His body became rigid with the effort. Yet his eyes, eloquent and compelling, held hers, crying out that she was his—*his!* Her own, helpless to deny him, answered. And she knew that it was true, that from the very beginning of things the Force, which had so strangely brought them together, had intended them to be of one piece. She knew that from the day in the mills, when he had so roughly set her out of the way and then saved her life, he had taken possession of her soul. She knew why she had never been able to forget that scene in the mills, knew the meaning of the restlessness and discontent with other men that had taken hold of her; in her heart had sprung up an ideal of sure, steadfast strength that could be trusted to the uttermost and, for her, he alone could fill that ideal. He might cruelly hurt her—he had cruelly hurt her—yet she could not free herself from the bond that held them, could never desire release. For so do strong men and women love. Years might pass, they might never meet again, yet it would always be the same. Across the years and the distances the bond would hold.

Yet between them stood the barrier that could not be ignored. Fearing, she summoned her defenses against the love that was overcoming.

"Mr. McAdoo, have you heard from *him?*"

The compelling fire in his eyes died down. In its place came a look that made her heart bleed, the look of a man who suffers without hope of reprieve.

He passed his hand in a hopeless gesture across his eyes. "I had forgotten—*that.* I have heard nothing. I have no hope of finding him. I'm afraid something has happened—"

"No, no! You mustn't say that. We mustn't lose hope of finding him and saving him from himself. Surely—surely—nothing can have happened."

He shook his head hopelessly, answering nothing. To both of them, in that moment, the bitter cup seemed overflowing. Their eyes at last turned away, each fearing to look upon the other's suffering. . . .

"Shall we go up to him?" she said. "He wants to see you before he dies. He is waiting for you."

"Yes. I—I had forgotten why I am here."

Together, in silence they mounted the stairs to the chamber of death.

That night William Murchell died.

And Robert McAdoo reigned in his stead.

Alone in the big, old library with its fragrance of memories, Bob watched the night through, bracing his soul for the struggle that was coming. And the struggle, he knew, must be not only with the people's enemies, but with himself, too. For his temptation pressed him hard, tormenting him with the vision of the happiness that might be his if the soul of the new McAdoo would retreat but one step—so little, but so vital to him—from its purpose. Until the morning, as did Jacob, Bob wrestled with his soul, hearing always the last words of the man who had died, "Your people. . . . You must be true!"

And his soul's answer, "I must be true—in all—or in nothing!"

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

IT was long before sleep came to any in the house of death that night. To Eleanor it did not come until the first streak of gray showed in the east. Then she fell into a light, dreamful slumber that lasted only until broad daylight had come. She was awakened by the sun shining into her eyes; through the window she could see the glorious sky of a clear spring morning. The fleeting fragrance of the season, gathered up by the breeze in its wanderings over a hundred leagues of budding life, came to her. It was the mating time; from without came the blithe call of bird to mate. She stirred contentedly. It was the first night she and Bob McAdoo had passed under the same roof. The thought was like a caress.

She arose and went to her bath, to emerge fresh and glowing. Slowly she set about dressing herself. There was death in that house, death with its sadness if without its bitterness. Yet she could not repress a feeling of buoyancy, of life.

She went down-stairs to find the hall deserted by all save the sleepy man-servant.

"Is no one down?" she asked him.

"Mr. McAdoo, madam," he answered, struggling manfully to stifle a yawn. "Beg pardon, madam. He's been out these two hours. Went to send a telegram, he said."

She passed on out to the wide, vine-covered veranda. There she stood, drawing in deep breaths of the pure spring air. The cool breeze played upon her uplifted face. Once more the mingled odors of spring were borne to her grateful senses. The physical delight of the healthy in a clear new day pervaded her. It was easy to forget death for the moment; there was no unhappiness, nothing but beauty and life, in the spirit of the morning.

Suddenly she caught herself, breathing a little prayer.

"Let me not be too happy! Let me not forget that there is a to-morrow!"

From down the street came the clang of swift footsteps. Her heart beat time to the stride; she knew who the pedestrian was.

He halted close to her. Once again he caught her in that grip of the eyes from which she could not free herself. Both knew that no longer might they deny words to the love burning in their hearts and from their eyes.

"You are like no woman I have known," he said slowly.

"Yet you have known none but good women."

He shook his head proudly. "That is not the difference."

"I have given you little reason to think me good," she said sadly.

"You are good; I know that. But were you the wickedest woman in the world, still you would be the one woman to me. Eleanor! Eleanor!" he breathed.

"Ah!" she cried, "you must not! We dare not—"

"How I love you!"

"Ah!" She drew a long, shuddering breath. Then her head went back proudly. "Why not? Why may our lips not say what our hearts and eyes have said—since we ask nothing? I love you. I always shall. I can't help it."

"Do you want to help it?"

"See!"

She stepped down one stair, where her face was on a level with his. Fully and freely she gave him of her eyes, that through them he might see down into her heart, afire with the love surpassing, that asked nothing, that was content with loving.

"Eleanor! Eleanor!" he breathed again.

"Yes." She met his eyes steadily, fearlessly. "Even though we may never know the happiness of sharing one life, I shall always be—yours—and you mine. Life can't take that from us."

He turned away in the anguish of temptation. His big body trembled. His voice was hoarse, as he spoke.

"I know now why men give up honor for a woman. Do you know how easy it would be for me to throw everything else overboard and seek happiness with just you—in spite of everything—even now?"

"Look at me!" Slowly he turned once more to meet her eyes. "You will not tempt me, will you? You are stronger than I; you mustn't let me be weak. Do you think I don't know? How often during the last two years I have *prayed* that you might be weak enough to come to me, and that I might be weak enough to yield.

But we must not. We can not. It wouldn't be as easy as it seems now. It would be a cowardly happiness. It wouldn't be *clean*. Until he is found and we know he is reclaimed, we could never be really happy, there would always be a stain on our love. We know what selfishness brings. . . . You belong to the people of this state. Our false happiness would cripple you, because you would always have the knowledge that you hadn't been true to yourself. And if you aren't true to yourself, how can you be true to your trust? . . . I want it—I need it—more than you do. But I—I care for you too much ever to want you to be untrue to the best in you on my account. You won't tempt me, will you?" she pleaded, her voice growing more and more unsteady. "Because I—I am so happy in just being near you—when I am with you something keeps pulling, pulling me to you—I am almost past the resisting point. Don't tempt me—yet I *want* you to tempt me—you must be strong for both of us.

"And remember," she went on, trying to be strong, "remember that it is harder for me than for you. To-morrow, after the funeral, I go back to my little work, which, after all, is only a scanty refuge. While you go on to your great task that often will shut me out of your mind and heart. It will always be that—your work always first, I always second."

"No!" he said roughly. "It will never be that. You are first—you always shall be."

"Ah! I wanted you to say that. But you mustn't. And it mustn't be *true*. That is the selfish part of my love I must always fight to keep down—even if—even if we must not always be apart. You mustn't let me be selfish. If you place me first, if you don't sacrifice me when it is right, you can't be true to yourself, you won't be—my man. . . . You are so strong. . . . You mustn't come to weakness through me."

"Yet you say you are not good!" he cried.

The vine-wreathed veranda hid them from the world. She went to a chair, fell into it and buried her face in her hands. Harsh, dry sobs shook her.

Bob was helpless to comfort her. Awkwardly, as one unused to caress, he put out his hand and let it rest upon her hair. The unaccustomed touch sent fire racing through his veins.

"Eleanor!" he murmured hoarsely.

She caught his big hand and pressed it to her cheek. "I am not good. I am only weak and shameless. You must be strong . . . or take me."

He sat down beside her and took both her hands in his firm, strong clasp.

"Dear!" How strangely the word dwelt upon his lips! "Dear, look at me. . . . Two years ago I found myself. The people of my city trusted me, when they would have been justified in crushing me."

"But you weren't guilty. Katherine has told me."

"I wasn't directly responsible for the crime that was done. But I don't hide behind that. It was done for me—and I accepted the benefit. But my people didn't know it. Nevertheless, they trusted me. They have helped me to grow stronger, at home and over the state. The good people here, they have trusted me and strengthened me. In a few weeks I am to be nominated for governor. I can be elected, I think. Great power has been placed in my hands. I am under the most sacred obligations to the people of this state, to

John Dunmeade, to him who is dead. I can do much. . . . These two years I have tried to atone. I have tried to kill the ugly self that ruled me. I thought I had succeeded. And now . . . I find I have failed. . . . I am ready, at your word, to forget everything but myself . . . but you! . . . Listen! You must know what that means. . . . We must start a new life together. The wealth that Murchell has left me, I will give to Dunmeade. All the knowledge I have gained, all the power I have won, all the power that has been given to me, for a purpose not my own, must be thrown aside. All Murchell's work will have gone for nothing. John Dunmeade, left alone, will be beaten. The people who have trusted me will be helpless. I must give these things up because, having been weak once, I dare not face the responsibility of weakness in power. . . . It *would* be easy. Every nerve in me aches to do it. If you say the word, I will give up these things for you. . . . And I will never reproach you, never blame you. . . ."

He paused questioningly. While he was speaking, her eyes had not left his. She was very white.

"My answer is—I love you!"

"And that means—No?"

"And that means—No!"

Their eyes fell away. She leaned back in her chair and looked out into space. Half unconsciously, she freed one hand from his clasp and with it caressed the backs of his hands. He watched the gesture sadly.

After a while, "We need each other, to be strong, don't we?" she said softly. He gave no answer.

". . . I am afraid," she went on, later, in dreamy, detached phrases, "I am afraid to hope. . . . I have always felt that he would return and thought that with his coming everything would be right. . . . Now I dare not hope. . . . All at once it is clear —ah! I can't bear to think of that! . . . We are not our own. . . ."

Suddenly he caught her hands to his lips and covered them with rough, passionate kisses. She let him.

"We are not our own. . . . And it is something, O, everything! . . . to know that we have had this hour . . . with its bitterness and its sweetness. . . . And to know that we have been strong. . . . And always shall be. . . ."

"Eleanor! Eleanor!"

"And we shall always be together. . . . For always you will know that I am praying for you . . . and loving you . . . as you will be loving me. . . ."

The temptation flew away and left them, if not at peace, with a new courage.

Once he turned to her and cried, "I would not be without this love, even though it means heartache!"

"Nor would I. . . . And somehow—now—this happiness is so real, so wonderful . . . the heartache so far away—so impossible. . . . I have faith!"

CHAPTER VII

THE TRIUMPH OF THE FORCE

SOMETIMES the two on the veranda spoke, in low, hushed tones they had not used even at Murchell's bedside: broken, detached sentences—of what they could not have told. They came very near to each other in that hour. . . .

Up the street tramped a figure, still powerful if a bit too large of girth, with the rolling, swaggering gait that misfortune never taught. He puffed as he walked, his wind not being what it had been when he pommeled the great Donnelly to a draw. Diamond in ring and stud cast back the morning's sunshine jubilantly, his red face beamed with good-will, if not peace, to all; and why not? The night had brought him no sense of personal loss and he dreamed dreams of great power and lively "scrapping." That the power was to be another's diminished the primitive ardor of his gloating soul no whit. And if the struggle was to be in a great cause—why, though a reformer by grace of his chief's conversion, he still loved fighting for fighting's sake.

Bob saw him. With a keen pang Eleanor saw Bob come forth from his dreaming into reality.

"It's Haggin. Something's wrong." The hushed, gentle tone had given place to the crisp, curt voice of the man of affairs.

"Mornin', Governor." (For a year Haggin, confident in his liege's invincibility, had called him nothing but "Governor.") "Special brand of day you've ordered, eh?" His eyes wandered uncomfortably toward Bob's companion.

"What are you doing here, Tom?"

"Miss Flinn sent me—"

"Kathleen! What's wrong? Is Patrick—"

"Naw! Nuthin's wrong. Everything's right. Pat's all right, too, except that he's in a split stick whether to hang crape on his buzzum because *he's* dead, or fly a flag because *you're* the boss now."

Bob smiled sadly. "We may all be sorry, Tom."

"Right!" Haggin answered, sobering instantly. "He was a big man. But—you're a bigger."

Bob shook his head. He turned to Eleanor. "Mrs. Gilbert, I want to introduce one of my best friends." With a woman's quick eye for details, she noted his manner as he introduced Haggin to her, so simple, so frank, without a hint of the patronage many men affect in similar situations.

Haggin's hat came off awkwardly; his red face turned purple.

"Pleased to meet ye, ma'am," he managed to stammer.

She held out her hand, which Haggin first surveyed doubtfully, then took gingerly into his own big fist.

"I am very glad to meet *you,* Mr. Haggin. And I think, from what I've heard, you're a friend worth having."

Haggin released her hand and began to fan himself vigorously with his derby, although the morning was pleasantly cool.

"O, we're all glad enough to be his friends, down our way." Haggin grinned. "It pays. Though," still fanning vigorously, "that ain't the only reason. He's—he's on the square. There ain't many men I'd say that for—an' he knocked me out once, too." The grin returned.

"Knocked you out? I'm afraid I don't understand—"

"Put me into the clear," Haggin defined, illustrating by punching himself lightly on the point of the jaw.

"Oh! He hit you? Hard?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered soberly. "He hit me awful hard." He winked ponderously at Bob.

"But he was generous enough to forgive me," Bob smiled.

"I had to. An' I ain't ever been sorry *fer* it, neither." Haggin returned to his awkward embarrassment. "He's been on the square with me always."

"Sit down, Tom," Bob commanded. "And tell us what you came for. Please don't go," he said to Eleanor.

And his eyes added, "I can't bear to lose these minutes with you."

Haggin deposited himself in a chair and leaned back comfortably. "Pretty, ain't it?" He waved his hand toward the lawn. "You'll like it when you come here next term." Then he added casually, "Paul Remington come back last night."

"Paul Remington!" cried two voices. And Haggin suddenly became aware of two white, strained faces turned toward him.

"He has come home," Bob repeated slowly, dazedly. *"How?"*

Haggin shook his head. "On the bum. Too much—" He executed a gesture that was intended to indicate the act of taking a drink.

"I've been afraid of that," Bob muttered. "Tell us."

"Well, last night, Miss Flinn called me up an' told me to come up to the house quick. When I got there, I found *him.* Guess I was kind o' rough with him. Asked him what he was doing *there.*" Haggin grinned ruefully. "Miss Flinn told me where to get off at. Said where *should* he go but to his friends. I guess you'll back that up?"

"Yes! Go on."

"I'm glad o' that. I always did like him—he was such a nervy, good-lookin' cuss. An' I always had a notion they got him foul on that convention business somehow." Bob heard Eleanor draw a quick, gasping breath. Impulsively he put out his hand and let it rest on hers for a moment. Haggin discreetly looked the other way.

"He had a kid with him—his sister's—a little girl that—ahem!—that oughtn't to a' been born. It seems as he'd been hittin' it up gay, when he run into his sister. She was sick an' broke, an' he took care o' her till she died. Then he took care o' the kid a while. An' *then,* I guess, he couldn't stand it no longer, so he brought her over to Miss Flinn."

"Thank God!" breathed Eleanor.

"Yes, ma'am," Haggin agreed politely. "I didn't know this till afterwerds. It made me feel sort o' cheap. I don't know as I could a' come back, if I'd been in the same place an' constitooted the same. He ain't *all* piker, Governor. You think so?"

"I *know* he isn't, man."

"Guess he intended to stay, if he could square things with you. But on the train he heard some feller say somethin' that made him think he'd be in your way if he stayed. Thought his comin' back'd remind people of that Hemenway business. But when Miss Flinn told him it was *me*—not you—was Angel of Charity to them delegates, that changed his mind some. That's why they sent for me.

"He never says a word while I'm rough-housin' him. When I got through, he says, sharp, 'Haggin, Miss Flinn tells me you bribed those delegates.' 'That's straight,' says I. 'What are you goin' to do about it?' He never batted an eye—he ain't a four-flusher, Governor. 'There's just one thing to do,' he says. *An' we done it!"*

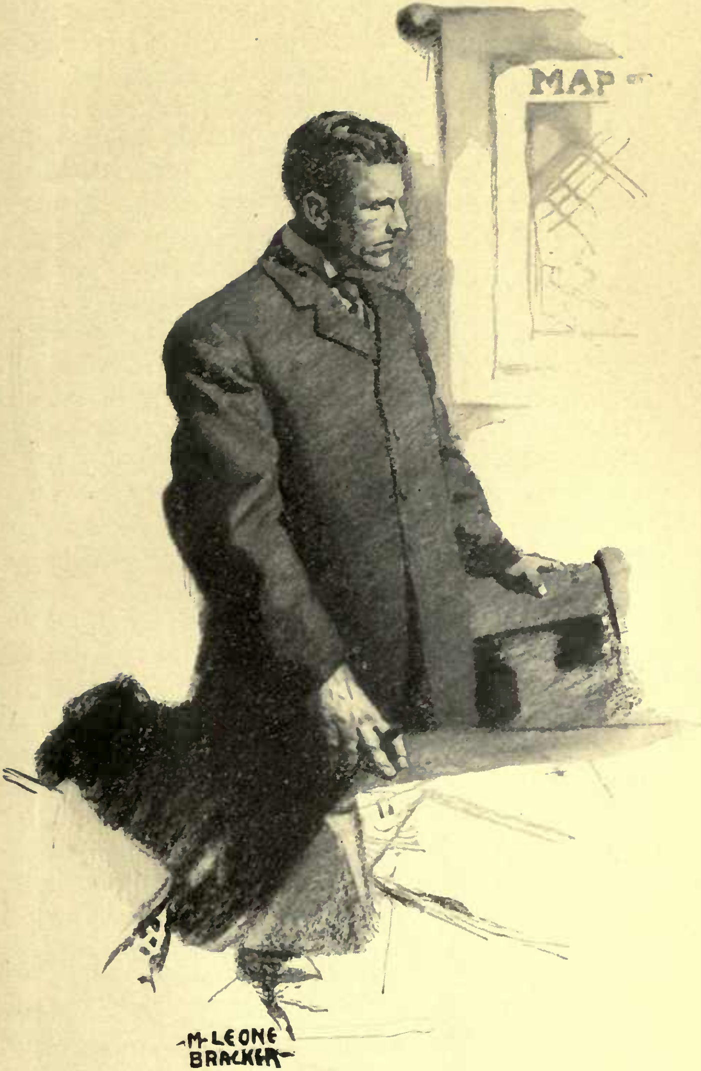
Haggin straightened up triumphantly.

"There won't be so much talk about that convention business now, I guess. I took him to a reporter an' he give anuther interview, tellin' all about that convention an' about how you took the blame that b'longed to *me*. It's a bully story. The reporter got it straight an' knew how to write it up. It's in all the mornin' papers. Here it is."

He pulled a newspaper from his pocket and flourished it before Bob's amazed eyes. "I *told* you I'd get that published *straight* before I was through," he chuckled.

"And then?" Eleanor suggested. Haggin had almost forgotten her in his interest in his tale. Now he noticed tears in her eyes; he wondered why.

"When we got back to the house, Miss Flinn asked him, 'Will you stay now, Paul?' He didn't say nuthin' fer a while. Then he straightened up an' said, 'If Bob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M LEONE BRACKER

will let me.' These was his very words. You'll let him, won't you, Governor?" Haggin was very earnest. "He's been up against a tough game, an' I always did like him an'—if you'd seen him, you'd know. He'll go to hell straight, if you don't keep hold of him. I ain't a preacher, but—"

Bob held out his hand. Haggin took it.

Haggin turned to Eleanor. "Didn't I say he's on the square? He's my kind o' man!"

Then Haggin noted a singular phenomenon. Neither Eleanor nor Bob were paying the least attention to his words. They were both standing, each lost in the other's eyes. He shifted uncomfortably in his chair, then arose, coughing loudly.

"Well, I guess I'll be goin'. If you're goin' down to see him, Governor, I'll meet you at the 'leven-forty."

"At the eleven-forty—" Bob mumbled mechanically. "O, yes, of course, the eleven-forty. I'll be there, Tom."

"Well—why, bless me! I nearly fergot. Before I left—I knew you'd want to hear about it all an' I told 'em I was comin' up here. An' Miss Flinn said to him, 'Paul, do you know Mrs. Gilbert is with the Dunmeades now?' I was sorry fer him. It had been a tough night fer him an' he was tired an' white as a ghost. He seemed to think a bit, then he said to me, 'Tell Bob to tell Mrs. Gilbert that there is no reason in the world—none at all—why I should stand between her and happiness. She will understand.' He made me say it over again. Those was his very words. 'There is no reason in the world why I should stand between her and happiness.' "

Once more Haggin noted that strange forgetfulness of his presence. And if he smiled to himself, at least, being something of a gentleman, he did not let the smile appear.

After a long moment Bob came to his senses to remark:

"Tom, the governor has some very particular, as I have heard. If you will go into the house, the butler will attend to your case."

Tom went.

Bob turned to her. Through the leaves of the vines a shaft of spring sunshine fell upon her face and hair. But it was not the sunshine from above that transfigured her to his eyes. He reached out and touched her hand gently, reverently.

"I can't believe it. . . . It has come so soon. . . . Ah! we had so little faith. . . ."

"Eleanor! Eleanor!" His voice was low and husky.

His hand fell from hers and his head went up bravely.

"I have been newsboy, mill-hand, heeler, grafter—please God, that last, at least, is ended! I don't know what crime stained my birth. I don't even know that I have a right to the name I bear. But—I love you."

"And that is all I want," she answered simply.

"There is no reason why we should wait, is there—Eleanor?"

"There is none. You are all I have in the world—Bob, dear."

As she spoke his name, he thrilled.

"You never took a vacation, did you, dear?"

"Yes, once. When I was sick."

"O, that doesn't count, you know. Will you take one this summer—with me? Just one little week—if the campaign will allow it?"

"We'll *make* the campaign allow it." His laugh rang boyishly.

"There's a place I know, in the woods. It is on a river, such a beautiful river, so cool and clear and deep. The woods are always deliciously fragrant. You sit in your canoe and float and dream all day long. And at night you light your camp-fire on the water's edge and you sit by it and watch the rippling path of gold it lays along the river—and count the stars and wonder what they all mean, up there—and forget that there is any one in the world—except just we two—"

He caught her closely to him.

"I haven't kissed you yet—"

They had forgotten death.

After a time he remembered.

She saw that his thoughts were afar off. She wondered what he was thinking.

He was looking into the years ahead, looking with the sure knowledge of the man who has seen the test applied. He saw the struggle, for he knew the enemy. He saw the temptations fought and overcome, for he knew himself at last. He saw the ultimate victory, for he knew his people. His heart filled with his longing and purpose. He, who had done so little, had received the reward of the faithful servant. Henceforward he would measure his service to the richness of the reward that was his.

She saw his lips move, but no sound fell. She read the words.

"Let me serve! Let me serve!"

"Ah!" she cried. "You are forgetting me already!"

He looked down into her eyes and drew her more closely to his heart. She was content.

"Let *us* serve!"

The death of Murchell brought to the harassed interests no relief, neither did it bring fear to the people of that state. For both knew that, on guard, between them, stood Bob McAdoo.

THE END

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